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Peter George Markotsis  
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**WHAT THE LANDSCAPE TELLS US:  
NATIONALISM AND THE ERASURE OF INDIGENOUS NARRATIVES  
AND HISTORIES ON LONG ISLAND, NY**

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Earth Science and Society

May 2021

Senior Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Earth Science and Society

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## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to everyone who has helped me over the course of the year as I have written this thesis. A special thanks to my professors who initially introduced me to the wonderful field of geography and taught me so much these past four years. Thank you to my friends for making sure I took breaks and had fun and for listening to all of my thesis related rants. I so appreciate you all sticking by me. Oregon is going to happen. Thank you to the volunteers at work who made me smile and made balancing work and school so much more manageable. Thank you to my parents for their admirable patience and understanding during this year and a quarter of remote study during covid. I wasn't expecting to be home during my senior year of college, but I thoroughly enjoyed being able to spend time with you and reading Harry Potter together. Thanks to Costa for your immense historical knowledge and your eagerness to share it. Thanks to Step for making sure I knew what new Star Wars and Harry Potter legos were coming out and for making me laugh. Thanks to Summer for being so fluffy and cheerful. And thank you to the rest of my family for keeping me inspired and contributing to some of the ways that this thesis evolved. Ευχαριστώ πολύ. Σε αγαπώ. Ποτέ μην γαργαλάτε έναν δράκο που κοιμάται.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Though indigenous people still live on Long Island, prior to colonization and the accompanying theft of land and genocide by European settlers, Long Island was predominantly home to the Lenape and Algonquian people.

## **ABSTRACT**

Today, many non-indigenous Long Islanders do not know the island's colonial history, or believe the injustices associated with colonialism to solely exist in the past. Through processes of nationalism and the associated manipulation of the landscape, the collective memory of non-Indigenous Long Islanders is altered in such a way as to create the illusion of one cohesive community with a shared set of values and identities, while those who do not fit into that image are erased from the landscape.

This thesis explores how the landscape has been altered since the first English settlers arrived on Long Island, and how its manipulation has changed over time, such as through the use of museums and statues. It also examines the impact that these processes have on Indigenous groups today, highlighting efforts by the Montaukett Nation for formal recognition from New York State.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SEEING LONG ISLAND: THE HISTORY AND LIFE MADE TO APPEAR INVISIBLE**

This thesis arose from an 8-hour car trip and a Facebook post.

My older brother and I drove from Long Island to Buffalo, NY, so that he could move from one apartment to another. We spent one day lifting couches and tables through narrow hallways, just barely finishing before dark. The next day, as a way of saying thank you, my brother took me an hour southeast to Letchworth State Park, the “Grand Canyon of the East.”

Though the waterfalls were beautiful, and the sight of Devonian aged rocks excited me more than I can tell, the thing that stuck with me from that trip was a small signpost located on the edge of the canyon that runs through the park. According to the sign, Letchworth State Park had not always been known by that name. Before being driven out of the area after the Revolutionary War, the Seneca people had referred to the area as “Sehgahunda.” At some point, the name had changed to Letchworth State Park, after William Letchworth, an industrialist, sold this land to New York.

This name change intrigued me. I often share pictures of my outdoor excursions on Facebook, often without any comments other than “look at this wonderful tree!” When I shared my pictures of Letchworth State Park, I made a note of how the name had changed from the original Sehgahunda, and that the name should have been left as it was. This prompted a frustrated response from a friend on Facebook whom I will refer to as Bjorn. Bjorn had made the usual argument about keeping politics out of nature, but he prefaced this with a sarcastic “I think they should change the name of Cold Spring Harbor [the town I live in] back to the Matinecock name of Wawapex.” He indicated that

the Matinecock were no longer here, and that we, the current inhabitants of Long Island, should not have to continuously revisit past injustices. We have our own lives to live, and he argued that there was nothing to be done about what had happened. Having been unaware of the original name of the land my town is located on, I decided to do some quick google searches about places that were important to me on Long Island, including my home of Cold Spring Harbor, Southold, Oyster Bay, etc., in order to learn more about their colonial history. I did indeed learn a lot about what occurred in the sixteen and seventeen hundreds, but I was surprised to learn that contrary to what Bjorn had indicated, there are still struggles between Euro-Americans and modern Native American tribes on Long Island today.

Most of what I found, at first, came from town websites, such as that of the town of Southold. I began investigating Long Island's colonial history and how that is represented before moving into more modern time periods. Many familiar names of European colonists popped up on those websites, including the Hortons (one of the first families in Southold and the namesake for the Horton's Point Lighthouse), Gardiner (of Gardiner's Island east of Shelter Island), and Young (the founder of Southold whose descendants own Young's Farm in Oyster Bay), as well as some unfamiliar names, such as Captain John Underhill, a professional soldier who immigrated to the colonies. Generally, these figures were mentioned in the context of having built the foundations of our society. Some of the websites also included some information about the indigenous groups that lived on Long Island (these sections were generally shorter). Again, I came across some familiar names, such as the Matinecock and Montaukett (in this thesis I use Montaukett and Montauk interchangeably, though Montauk sometimes also refers to the

point of land most commonly associated with the nation) tribes, as well as names that I had not heard before, including the Corchaugs (group living in on the North Fork of Long Island) and the Pharoah (last name, not title) family of the Montaukett. With each attempt to learn more about an unfamiliar name, place, group or concept that I came across, I would find even more unknown information that I would have to research. I had thought that I had a firm understanding of the history of Long Island but was quickly proven otherwise. There was so much that I did not know, and so much I still have yet to learn.

One thing I did learn is that many of the “past injustices” that Bjorn had insisted existed solely in the past still influence the lives of Native Americans today, and that attitudes such as his are actively constructed in order to hide those ongoing effects from our sight. For example, far from being extinct, the Montaukett tribe has been fighting for generations to be officially recognized by New York as a nation and reclaim some of their land. The Shinnecock tribe has recently been struggling against East Hampton after the town sued them for constructing a 61ft monument along the Sunrise Highway (the only road in and out of the Hamptons). It is not that the indigenous people have disappeared (clearly they are still here and struggling over space), but rather the ways in which we learn and tell stories about them, in school as well as in other settings throughout the Island, create the comfortable illusion for many of their neighbors that the history of Long Island’s native people remains in the past. In reality, injustice is just as much a part of our current time as it is a part of our history. Many Long Islanders believe these injustices remain in the past not because there is any truth to that statement, but because we are made to believe that it is true. In order to understand how the struggles of



modern Native Americans go unnoticed, we have to take a closer look at how national identities are constructed.

In Don Mitchell's book, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, Mitchell argues that "culture" is never any *thing*, but is rather a struggled-over set of social relations, relations shot through with structures of power, structures of dominance and subordination" (Mitchell, 2000, xv). One aspect of "culture" that he discusses is nationalism, or the creation of a national identity. The idea of a nation, he argues, is not something that is natural. It is constructed. Mitchell explains that "nations are *represented* as spaces in which members of the nation have a strong bond with each other, a bond that trumps whatever differences (of class, gender, or religion, for example) may divide people within the nation from another. And yet this bond can only be *imagined*; it can never actually be *known*, because the collectivity that forms the nation is too large to allow any one person to know more than a few of her or his fellow nationals" (Mitchell, 2000, 269). So, because the nation is too large to actually be a naturally occurring "cultural" entity, the nation has to create a sense of national identity and incorporate people into that construct. People need to feel as if they belong to this organization in order to maintain it in perpetuity. They have to want to work for the benefit of the nation. However, Mitchell argues that "while national identity is at one level all about 'belonging,' it is also all about exclusion, about keeping out those you do not like and identifying yourself largely in terms of who you are not" (Mitchell, 2000, 262). By galvanizing people to identify with the nation, some people will be purposefully left out.

It is this idea that nationalism is built both on inclusion and exclusion that speaks to the issue of indigenous erasure on Long Island. Bjorn believed that no indigenous

people remained on Long Island because he was made to believe that. The notion of what Long Island is and who its people are has been crafted around certain images that do little to acknowledge Native Americans. The exclusion of certain groups and people from communities is intentionally pursued by powerful institutions and individuals. In order to make Long Islanders feel more connected to the idea of the United States of America, the presence of indigenous communities was masked.

In order to understand how nationalism has shaped Long Island, we need to look at how it is generally constructed. A few different processes and tools are required. These tools and methods all play out within the landscape, or the built environment in which life plays out. The landscape can be a home, neighborhood, town, the mall, or anywhere people can move through and interact with. According to Mitchell, the landscape “is both a place and a ‘way of seeing,’” (Mitchell, 2000, 99) and “the landscape way of seeing is precisely a technique to render control, both ideological and material, as ‘natural,’ as part of the inescapable order of things” (Mitchell, 2000, 116). By describing the landscape as a way of seeing, Mitchell is saying that we as humans base our behaviors and attitudes on what we see around us. Therefore, attempts to build national identities go through the landscape in order to reach the people of a specific region and make them feel as if they are a part of that nation. Physical manifestations of what the nation means, or what the nation wants to be are built into the landscape in order to direct the people.

Mitchell’s mentioning of the landscape being used to make certain ideas appear as if they are naturally occurring is especially important. The landscape is where collective memories are stored, and those memories “play(s) a fundamental role in the transmission and transformations of society” (Winter, 2011, 393). What we see in the landscape

informs us as individuals moving about through that landscape what we should remember as members of an imagined nation. Those memories, artificially constructed though they may be, direct how we act and how we perceive the world, and the nation, around us, all while appearing as if they had organically developed over time around us. They shape our conceptions of the community without appearing as if they are pushing a certain point of view. Histories fade away as new narratives of the nation are constructed.

Memories such as those produced in the landscape are only made possible because of their visibility, as well as the lack of clearly visible narratives of those being excluded from the landscape (such as modern indigenous people on Long Island), having been pushed to the side. Visibility of certain narratives is important because “the process of nation-building thus requires that the state interferes with the consciousness of its new citizens, turning people’s attention away from more parochial concerns towards the nation-state” (Kong, 1997, 218). While private spaces can and do influence how people act and participate in the community, this interference of citizens’ consciousness needs to actively draw people’s attention away from narratives that may go against or are irrelevant to those of the nation, and requires public spaces that more than a few individuals will move through and will be directed towards a constructed national identity. Nations require multiple people and communities to become invested in them. But public spaces do more than offer a tool for nations to construct themselves. Indeed, Mitchell argues that public spaces are instrumental in both producing *and* resisting national identity, an identity which would falter without the constant reassertion across space of what it represents, interfering with the attention of its people. Symbols have to be seen (not necessarily closely studied) in order to do work. Repetition of certain

symbols in the public eye serves to continuously remind individuals what the community or nation they exist in stands for, and what it and its citizens looks like. In this way, the nation is clearly defined.

Is this what happened on Long Island? Has Bjorn simply picked up on the various conspicuous clues that were purposely embedded in the landscape in order to signal that today's Long Island is free of those terrible injustices that happened in the past, that we no longer need to think about the genocides because that is not Long Island's current reality in the same way that it was hundreds of years ago? Essentially, yes. In this case, as in the case of so many other individuals, nationalistic memories transmitted through various symbols have managed to redefine the past and present, and effectively separate those two constructions from one another. Long Island is made to appear as if a specific way of life and culture exists here and pushes away the less desirable aspects of its history.

So, to recap, nationalism creates a sense of belonging in some groups/individuals while excluding others. This is accomplished through the use of different landscapes. Landscapes are where collective memories are shaped. These memories are remembered in different symbols.

But what are those different symbols and how do they work? How does Long Island erase the presence of its indigenous people?

Growing up on Long Island, I did not learn much about the Native Americans. My teachers would quickly go over the Iroquois Confederacy and President Tyler's victory at Tippecanoe, and then move on to Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the preferred topics of high school history classes. In addition to inadequate and misleading lessons in

school, there are a number of physical structures built into the landscape around Long Island. There are monuments honoring colonial figures, and caricatures of indigenous people such as the 21ft tall statue known as “Chief Running Fair” outside of the Riverhead Raceway (a racing car track in the town of Riverhead). There are countless books, movies, poems, artworks and newspaper articles circulating throughout our libraries and bookstores that perpetuate the myth of the “vanishing Indian” (Witek, 1994, 208). Institutions such as the Montauk Indian Museum add to the myth by advertising itself as a chance to see Montauk “through ancient eyes” (Montauk Historical Society), implying that there are no people of Montaukett descent left to tell their own story. The Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum that I visited on school trips taught visitors about how colonists and early citizens of the United States whaled and the tools involved while neglecting to mention how whaling was used as a means to prevent Native Americans from being counted on the census (Matthews, 2018, 37) (the museum is currently developing an exhibit on Shinnecock whalers, and I actually passed along Matthews’ article to them just in case). Roads have been constructed that have caused people to bypass historic Native American regions such as Freetown in Setauket (Matthews, 2018, 46). The many false and misleading narratives surrounding Native Americans on Long Island have even led to major legal decisions such as the 1910 court case in which New York State Judge Abel Blackmar declared the Montaukett Nation extinct, despite multiple Montaukett people being in the courtroom at the time of the decision (Dennis, J).

There is also an obsession with George Washington throughout Long Island. This is explained by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2015), who says, “all over the continent, local histories, monuments, and signage narrate the story of first settlement: the founder(s), the

first school, first dwelling, first everything, as if there had never been occupants who thrived in those places before Euro-Americans.” George Washington is part of that founding narrative that Long Islanders love to tell. He is part of the origin story of the elementary school I attended, giving the workers who were building the school glasses of water. When I volunteered as a guide at Horton’s Point Lighthouse in Southold, I was told that Washington had deemed the location a worthy spot for a lighthouse, but that “no one was around to see the project through.” Friends of mine in different neighborhoods have their own Washington stories. We have latched on to George Washington as the foundational story of Long Island, replacing the actual foundational events that occurred before he visited our island. Our history seems to start with him, influencing how the landscape has been built. While you can follow the Washington spy trail all around the island, finding accurate stories about the indigenous people is much more difficult.

This thesis is an attempt at understanding how some of the narratives that are told throughout Long Island today are molded by the landscape that we see around us. I will rely heavily on theories of nationalism and landscape as presented by Don Mitchell and Benedict Anderson as the framework for the thesis. It asks how we have come to be the community we are today, and how the Long Island landscape around us directs our actions and shapes our memories, specifically those concerning the indigenous population. The two main questions that the thesis seeks to describe are: how is the landscape used to communicate a sense of identity to those moving through it, and why do we (non-indigenous Long Islanders) not see the people that exist in front of us?

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical background of Long Island and dives a little bit more into theoretical arguments around landscape and colonialism. It engages texts

such as Don Mitchell's, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, and Benedict Anderson's, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, to describe how we determine how our communities are constructed, and how certain groups or people are embraced by certain communities while others are not. It incorporates articles such as "Created Communities: Segregation and the History of Plural Sites on Eastern Long Island" by Christopher Matthews and Allison McGovern, and "The Thirteen Tribes of Long Island: The History of a Myth" by John Strong to better understand how European colonists reconfigured Native American societies on Long Island into delineated spaces to better suit colonial efforts to expand their land base, and how those efforts have shaped how Long Islanders remember and perceive Native Americans today. All of these discussions are used in order to explore the placemaking of Long Island and how the delineation of land impacts the people and societies living on that land.

Chapter 3 delves deeper into the continued efforts of the Montaukett Indian Nation to be recognized by New York State as such. It starts with the 1910 court case, *Pharaoh V. Benson* in which Judge Blackmar decided that the Montauk Nation was extinct and investigates how the court arrived at its decision. The chapter continues by looking at both the court cases that preceded the 1910 decision and certain actions that incited the legal action, such as the exploits of Arthur W. Benson, an industrialist, who "bought" land that had belonged to the Montauk Nation in order to expand the Long Island Railroad (Matthews, 2018, 39). It also looks at how the Montaukett Nation has continued to demand New York State's recognition of their tribal sovereignty and the

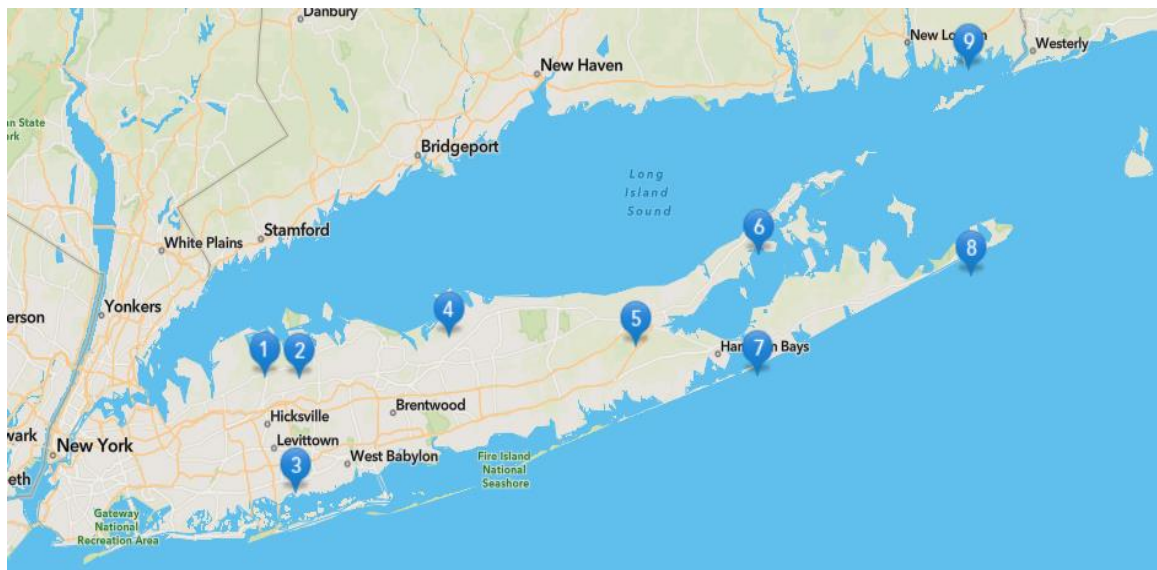
recent bills that have passed through the state government, only to be vetoed by the governor.

Chapter 4 explores some of the different landmarks in the Long Island Landscape that I have visited that speak to ideas of what Long Island is. It does this by pairing theoretical work around the impact of monuments, museums, road names, etc. (such as Confederate monuments in the US and Holocaust museums in the UK, US and Israel) with specific examples of landmarks telling stories about the indigenous people or colonists on Long Island. The three landmarks that are the focus of this chapter are the Southold Indian Museum, the Captain John Underhill Memorial, and the Riverhead Raceway statue.

The thesis also attempts to include counter-narratives in the chapters, citing sources created by indigenous people and nations to represent their perspectives. Native American nations and people have been outspoken and continue to fight against colonial and modern narratives that have sought to erase them from the landscape. There have been multiple efforts to show non-native Long Islanders that there are indeed indigenous nations that retain their own culture and national identity. The Matouwac research center, for example, offers articles and a timeline about the Montauk Nation court cases. JeremyNative.com is a website put together by a Shinnecock artist named Jeremy Dennis which features a map of Long Island that highlights different sites that are important to indigenous groups. The website also features articles and links to more information, providing a wealth of knowledge regarding the Long Island Landscape from an indigenous perspective. Throughout the thesis I try to refer to these sources wherever I can.



By looking at these various topics, this thesis attempts to understand how people, whether as individuals or as larger scale institutions, come to imagine communities into existence that accept some people/groups while rejecting others. How is it that on Long Island so many of us do not recognize the oppression and dispossession of indigenous people as something that is ongoing, but as something that is only representative of the past? Asking questions like these has helped me to learn more about the history of the island I have lived on my whole life, and I hope that this thesis pushes others to consider the histories and stories of their own communities, and how those histories may still be playing out today despite our being told that they are not.



Map 1.1: A map of Long Island marking some of the locations featured in this thesis. 1) Oyster Bay, 2) Cold Spring Harbor, 3) Massapequa, 4) Setauket, 5) The Riverhead Raceway, 6) Southold, 7) The Shinnecock Nation, 8) Montauk, 9) Mystic, CT.

## CHAPTER 2. THE COLONIZATION OF LONG ISLAND

In order to understand how indigenous people and nations on Long Island are made invisible today, we must first look at the early history of how the United States was created and how, through the processes of colonialism and nationalism that supported one homogenous worldview, the landscape of Long Island was delineated and reshaped to exclude the indigenous population. As Rebecca Solnit (2000, 85) says in her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, “we tend to consider the foundations of our culture to be natural, but every foundation had builders and an origin – which is to say that it was a creative construct, not a biological inevitability.” The landscape – the visible human environment and the symbols that are placed within it – serves to shape how we view our history and current identity and is actively worked on by people. (Mitchell, 2000, 93). Understanding modern Long Island and how its spaces are delineated and how they serve to direct and shape the behaviors and actions of the population necessitates examining how the landscape has been shaped over time by the colonists and their descendants. It requires understanding how Long Island became the *place* that it is today.

What is a place? Space refers to the physical dimensions that surround us, such as a building, or a hill. Place refers more to how we perceive, think about, relate to and talk about the locations that we inhabit. Hayden (1995,16) argues that “an individual’s sense of place is both a biological response to the surrounding physical environment and a cultural creation.” Place has a social component. For example, we may occupy the physical space of an island, but the place of Long Island is created as people imagine their relationship to the land and others inhabiting it. Through our daily activities and ways of being, we create meanings in a given space, making it into a place. But places are

not all inclusive. Who belongs to the land and who does not, what activities and practices are acceptable within the landscape, what it means to be in community and what that community believes itself to be and how it is perceived by others, are all aspects of place. Because places are imagined by people, they hold all of our shortcomings and limitations, as well as, potentially, our strengths. In order to understand places that exist today, the history of how that place was constructed needs to be considered. This chapter seeks to discuss Long Island's history as it relates to the construction of place by the European settlers, and how that place was made to hide the presence of the indigenous people through the colonization of space.

While examining the history of Long Island, it is important to keep in mind that the notion that cultural foundations had to be constructed is one of the main principles of post-modernism. Post-modernism is a system of thought that advocates the abandonment of essentialism - the idea that a culture must have certain essential or natural qualities that determine the characteristics or tendencies of that culture. In other words, essentialism is the thought that people from certain cultures act in certain ways because of an aspect of that culture that is innately within each person of that culture in some sort of biological or natural way (an idea instrumental in nationalism). Post-modernism argues that no culture has any essential qualities, rather they are socially constructed (Cresswell, 2013). Though I will talk more about culture and landscape in chapter three, it is important to note that Long Island's current culture is built upon its history of colonialism and the erasure of other histories. By broadening our understanding and focus of history, we can better understand how the symbols and stories embedded by the US and descendants of colonists and white Europeans in the physical landscape today contribute to the

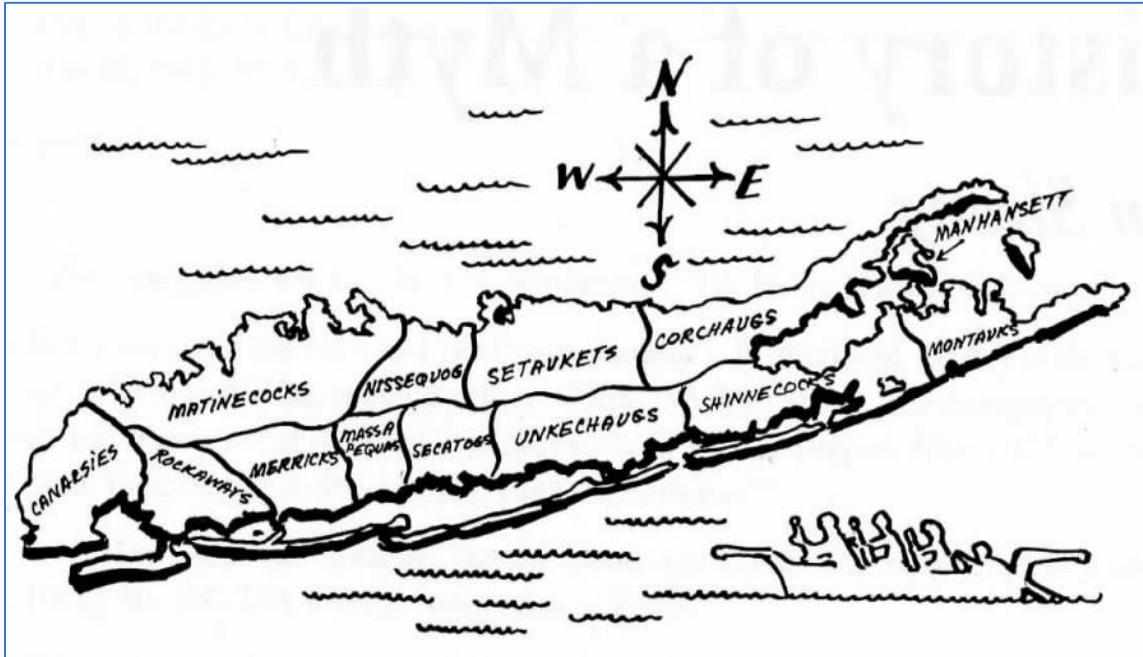
invisibility and continued dispossession of the modern indigenous population of Long Island.

A conversation regarding history cannot be conducted without mentioning nationalism. Though the US was not yet an entity during the early oppression of the indigenous population, some of the same pressures that exist under nationalism existed then. Benedict Anderson (2016, 6) defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” No one in a nation knows every single individual in that nation, and so this community, as Anderson suggests, is imagined. Expanding on his point about the nation being limited, Anderson says that, “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation” (Anderson, 2016, 7). He also suggests that “the state imagined its local adversaries, as in an ominous prophetic dream, well before they came into historical existence” (Anderson, 2016, xiv). As this chapter shows, when the colonists arrived on Long Island, they immediately began to shape an imagined community. Just as Anderson claims, this community created boundaries for itself, separating the culture and traditions that the colonists brought with them from those of the indigenous population – the imagined adversaries whom the colonists would systematically attack, both in terms of physical violence and in the destruction of their communities (which was then purposely lied about and misrepresented throughout history). The story of Long Island is a story of the creation of a community into which only certain ideas and people were admitted. As colonists took more and more land, they created conditions in which it became easier for

their descendants to imagine the indigenous community as no longer existing and take even more land and resources.

According to the Town of Southold's website, the self-proclaimed "oldest English town in New York State" was founded in 1640 after Puritan colonists from Connecticut led by John Young crossed the sound and came to what is now known as Long Island. Westward, the Dutch had already established themselves on the island of Manhattan.

However, when the colonists arrived, rather than stumbling upon terra nullius, or empty land, they encountered an island that was already populated, just like the lands they had previously colonized. The colonists immediately began to define the land and people that they encountered in ways that did not necessarily reflect the actual landscape, but rather in ways that made sense to them. Much of the early history of Long Island points to there being thirteen tribes within distinctly bounded geographic regions of the



Map 2.1: A map of the thirteen "tribes" of Long Island. From west to east they are: Canarsies, Rockaways, Matinecocks, Merricks, Massapeguas, Nissequog, Secatogs, Setaukets, Unkechaugs, Corchaugs, Shinnecoeks, Montauks and the Manhansett. Image from: (Strong, 1992, 40)

island. For example, the Town of Southold website claims that the Corchaug Tribe lived on the north fork of Long Island before it was colonized. Meanwhile the south fork from Easthampton to the eastern most part of the island was controlled by the Montauk Nation. The Shinnecock occupied a territory bounded between what is now Easthampton and Westhampton. These definitions that we find in textbooks, newspaper articles and museums today, however, do not reflect the societal/political organization of the native people, but are actually remnants of efforts made by the Dutch and English to “fix names and geographic locations to facilitate land purchases.” Rather than describe an organized community, the colonists “arbitrarily defined those boundaries” (Strong, 1992, 55), creating the thirteen tribes that appear on maps today (as shown in Map 2.1). Tribal systems were imposed in order to expedite land sales. Indeed, for the first few years of colonization “no clear group identification was important to either the sachems or the English at the time. The English became concerned when they began to expand their settlements and wanted to fix specific ‘tribal’ boundaries, identify ‘tribal’ names, and designate leaders with the authority to make real estate deals” (Strong, 1992, 57).

Though non-existent before colonialization, the expansion of European settlements forced the indigenous population into bounded regions that supported the restructuring of society into tribes. Prior to colonization, indigenous people moved around the island among various seasonal settlements. Not quite nomadic, the movement of indigenous people is described as “flexible sedentism” (Matthews, 2018, 33). Settlements were not populated year-round, but they were occupied for extended periods of time. For part of the year families would stay in small camps located near agricultural fields typically comprised of maize, though there is evidence that other crops such as

squash and beans were also cultivated (Waitz, 1970, 182). For the other part of the year, they would harvest marine sources from the rivers and bays located around the island (McBride, 1994). Indeed, marine resources were so numerous that eastern Long Island was known amongst Europeans as the “mint” of the wampum (shells used as currency between the indigenous people and colonists) trade (McBride, 1994, 8), and one of the names that the indigenous people used to refer to the island was “Seawanhaka,” or, “Island of Shells” (Coles, 1971, 94). Many indigenous people also engaged in whaling before the colonists arrived, and examples of canoe designs and whaling/fishing equipment can be found in museums such as the Southold Indian Museum.

The diversity and seasonality of resources contributed to the flexible sedentism of indigenous communities, and thus, the ways in which individuals and families interacted with one another. Not tied to any one place, indigenous people were able to move throughout the island. There were no significant language barriers between villages/communities as most natives used the Algonquian language (Coles, 1971, 94). Relationships between different villages on the island also seem to be much more amiable than many history classes claim. The indication of extensive trade as well as evidence that indigenous fortified villages were only constructed once Europeans arrived indicated that “sustained conflicts...was a post-contact phenomenon” (McBride, 1994, 14). Families in different seasonal settlements maintained kin related connections to “other native groups throughout coastal New York and southern New England” (Matthews, 2018, 33).

Resources that could not be found on the island were acquired through trade with other indigenous groups in New York. In *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United*

*States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2015) argues that many of the roads and trading networks used by the colonists were in fact built upon existing networks created by the indigenous population. This is supported by data indicating that about 80-90% of stone tools from the precontact time period are derived from rocks that are not local to Long Island (McBride, 1994, 14). These systems of trade made it easier for indigenous people to not be completely sedentary, as they did not have to find locations for every resource that they needed. Many Long Island historians use evidence of artifacts and items from other regions and peoples, such as the Iroquois, to claim that the Algonquian people of Long Island were “subjugated” or “oppressed” by those other groups in a North American version of colonialism (Strong, 2001). However, the presence of artifacts alone does not necessarily indicate or even suggest anything other than trade between different groups. Though occasional raids conducted by groups such as the Mohawk did occur, the evidence of artifacts, trading networks and a lack of fortified villages suggests that much like inter-island relationships, dynamics with those outside of the island were, if not entirely peaceful all the time, much less antagonistic than many historians suggest.

The evidence of flexible sedentism, kin networks and extensive trade with other groups not found on Long Island starkly contrasts the configuration of indigenous groups after their land was colonized. As early as 1642, Long Island natives appealed to the English about the rapidly changing landscape. One individual, Miantonomi, warned other natives that they would soon be gone. He referred to the land as it had been and what it was becoming, saying "for you know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, as also our woods, and of turkies, and our coves full of fish and fowl. But these English having gotten our land, they with scythes cut down the grass and with



axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved” (Strong, 1994, 568). The Shinnecock Nation Cultural Center and Museum supports this statement, saying that “the Shinnecock had to change much of their lifestyle to survive. Ancient skills, such as basket weaving, wampum making, and whaling were adapted to meet the economic necessity of living with the English.” Because of the threat of the colonists, it simply was not possible to maintain certain cultural activities or identities without adjusting them to fit within the colonial framework. Not only did the landscape change, but the population itself was also diminished. According to the Matouwac Research Center, the indigenous population declined from around 10,000 individuals in 1600 to less than 1,000 by 1659. Almost immediately after arriving on Long Island, colonists began to reshape the landscape into convenient patterns that allowed them to better expand their own territory while beginning to limit indigenous access to the land, as well as indications within the landscape that other individuals shared the island. Despite the role of indigenous people in helping the colonists to survive and grow crops, the colonist passed laws “limiting the aborigines in their own land” (Waitz, 1970, 185). By changing what the landscape looked like – altering the physical geography and social geography of Long Island - the colonists created the illusion that the land was actually theirs. The place that was created by and for the colonists failed to include the island’s indigenous people.

The changing landscape under colonialism reflects what Benedict Anderson (2016, 185) describes as the colonial aspiration “to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility; the condition of this ‘visibility’ was that everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number.” This notion helps to explain why the

colonists defined Long Island's inhabitants in the terms that they did. Dividing the island into thirteen distinct regions each populated by distinct peoples created a divide in how the colonists and indigenous people viewed the landscape and enabled the colonists to pursue their own interests. The colonists could now "see" a landscape that they could more easily interpret and exploit. As time passed and colonists acted on this version of the landscape that they had established, they continued to create an ever more European Long Island which operated on a positive feedback loop system. Defining 13 tribes/regions enabled the colonists to more easily steal land which in turn aided them in controlling the lives of the people living on that land and making the 13-tribe system that they had created appear more realistic. The more land they took, the more they could shape the land to conform to their image, and the more they saw a landscape that they could buy and continue to shape. Chapter 3 will explore in more detail at how the landscape is used to create visual cues directing behavior and promoting certain ideologies/identities while excluding others.

As stated above, the immediate impact of the redefinition of Long Island through colonial eyes was the transfer of land from indigenous people to the colonists. In Southold the indigenous people were continuously moved around from one place to another as the colonists found resources in each location (Waitz, 1970, 185). They only were allowed to remain on the land until the colonists found a use for it that suited their own needs. As colonists acquired more land, "the subordinate status of the Algonquian people was gradually institutionalized in numerous ordinances regulating alcohol consumption, the location of wigwams, the gathering of wild plants, the maintenance of fences, and the conduct of religious ceremonies" (Strong, 1994, 564). Not only had they

lost their own land, but within the new society imposed upon them the indigenous people faced obstacles in maintaining their connection to their past and to the life they had led. By minimizing this connection to the past and the ability of the population at the time to practice their own culture and live in the same way as their ancestors, the colonists effectively began the process of making the indigenous population appear invisible.

The process of making indigenous Long Island invisible was accomplished in a number of ways that often included the imposition of European perspectives and customs on the indigenous population, effectively masking their presence in the eyes of the colonists. Today, the federal government of the US defines tribes based on their ability to retain their language, religion, and community, and has the ability to reject requests made by populations to be recognized as an existing tribe (Strong, 1992, 67). Aside from the awkwardness of an institution defining the validity/authenticity of other cultures, it cannot be stressed enough that many of the tribes seeking recognition by the US government are unable to receive it because of actions taken by the US and colonists in order to create a society on Long Island for themselves.

There are a number of ways in which the indigenous culture/society was repressed. One of the primary methods was proselytization paired with the banning of indigenous rituals and festivals. Rites, festivals, myths and symbols all contribute to the promotion or restriction of certain identities (Johnson, 1995, 53). The restriction of certain customs paired with the promotion of others was an action designed to shape the identity of the indigenous population by severing their connection to their own cultural identity and replacing it with something more easily controlled by the colonists. The Powwow is one such ritual that was banned by the colonial authorities in 1665 and was

practiced in secret in the Shinnecock Nation until “several small ‘pageants’ were held between 1912 and 1945” (Strong, 1994, 54). The Powwow is described as “the most dramatic seasonal celebration” that is both a “social, economic, and religious occasion [that] serves to intensify a sense of community” among the Shinnecock people (Strong, 1994, 54). Despite this revival, Strong states that it was not until after World War 2 that the Powwow came to be celebrated annually once more. The Shinnecock Nation still practices the powwow.

As rituals such as the Powwow were banned, Christianity was thrust upon the indigenous population. One individual who acted as a missionary when he was not waging war against the same people he preached to was Captain John Underhill. The Underhill Monument marking his gravesite (as shown in Photograph 2.1) features a mural depicting the Captain preaching to a group of indigenous people (image can be found in chapter 4). Another well-known missionary was Azariah Horton, a member of the Horton family of Southold. Missionaries such as Horton spread Christianity throughout the island, effectively replacing the beliefs and rites of the indigenous population with Christian practices (Witek, 1994, 212). Even the names of indigenous people were changed as they were baptized. Indigenous names before baptism were not often recorded by colonists in writing. In his writings about his work, Azariah Horton referred to indigenous people not by name, but by generic terms such as “my dear people” (Witek, 1994, 210). In the 1740’s and 50’s, many indigenous people attended a Christian missionary school run by Eleazer Wheelok where they themselves were taught to become missionaries and speak against their own heritage (Mancini, 2015, 102). Religion was not introduced as a new and intriguing idea, but as a tool to suppress

indigenous identity and lend the colonists even more power to take and control the island and its people.

In addition to certain rites and spiritual/cultural practices being banned, laws were passed by the colonial government to restrict the ability of indigenous people to access the resources (like shellfish and hunting grounds) they needed to remain self-sufficient,



Photograph 2.1: The Underhill Memorial dedicated to Captain John Underhill: missionary, soldier and statesman. The memorial is a towering obelisk located at the Underhill Burying Ground in Oyster Bay. More info in Chapter 4.

manufacturing a system in which indigenous people were forced to work for colonists in order to access resources and pay off debts (Matthews, 2018, 32). In many cases, these restrictions led to indigenous people being corralled in specific regions and villages set close enough to white towns to be useful as sources of labor, but far away enough to remain unseen in the daily lives of the colonists (Matthews, 2018). Despite the efforts of missionaries to convert the indigenous population to Christianity, colonists still maintained a separation from them. One such town inhabited by indigenous people was Freetown, a town established by John Lyon Gardiner north of Easthampton (Matthews, 2018, 36). The land itself was owned by whites and rented to indigenous people in exchange for labor (Matthews, 2018, 36). Inhabitants of Freetown would work in Easthampton and then return to Freetown, minimizing the possibility that they would interact with anyone other than the individuals whom they directly worked with. Their work and lives, in effect, were made to be as invisible as possible.

The history of indigenous Long Island is not confined to the land, but also plays out in the sea as well. The Shinnecock Cultural Center and Museum states that long before colonists arrived the indigenous population went out to sea in order to fish and hunt whales. Harpoons, nets and boat designs can be seen in the Southold Indian Museum. As colonial coastal communities such as New London in Connecticut and shipping networks expanded in the late 1700's, indigenous men often found work as mariners when they were not farming (Mancini, 2015).

The movement of indigenous men from land to the sea impacted their communities on land as well as the connections they could forge with others. While there were many benefits to being out at sea, such as the creation and maintenance of

relationships between different tribes and the sharing of news, communities on land appeared to be diminishing in size, contributing to the myth of the “vanishing Indian” (Mancini, 2015, 157). Accurate records of the individuals who became mariners were not kept. Even in 1796 when the US passed “An Act for the protection of American Seamen” to create a record of sailors as a response to the British pressing American sailors into British service, the categories that individuals were placed into (based on skin tone) were arbitrary and often changed based on who was recording the sailors on their ship on a particular day (Mancini, 2015, 153). Sailors were placed into categories such as “copper,” ‘yellow,’ ‘colored,’ ‘mustee,’ ‘mulatto,’ ‘darkish,’ or ‘dark’” (Mancini, 2015, 153). These ambiguous terms did little to keep an accurate record of the indigenous sailors. Even the census at that time failed to record them, as the census was often taken after whalers and ships with indigenous crewmembers left port (Matthews, 2018, 37). Just as indigenous communities had land taken from them, were forced into communities nearby white towns in order to be of use to but not a part of those towns, and had their spiritual practices replaced with Christianity, their working at sea was used by the colonists and the US as a means of pushing them to the margins out of sight and making it easier for the creation of a homogenous society that excluded indigenous people from participating in it in ways authentic and beneficial to themselves.

History is often revised to inspire and be relatable to those with power, ignoring the tricky parts that might make them uncomfortable in order to maintain that power (Phillippi, 2017, 358). Much of the history of the oppression of indigenous people on Long Island is either left untold or is purposely misrepresented, keeping white Long Islanders blissfully ignorant while maintaining the illusion – an illusion that was

artificially created and continues to be propagated - that there is no discrimination still existing in our neighborhoods. This chapter strives to demonstrate how the history of Long Island and the purposeful and premeditated relegation of indigenous people to the margins of society - as early as the arrival of the colonists - directly shaped the current patterns of dispossession and invisibility. Chapter 3 explores the specific case of the Montaukett people of eastern Long Island, tracing the path of their dispossession over the course of history to the present. It shows but one example of many in the US of how colonialism and nationalism have impacted the indigenous population.



### **CHAPTER 3. THE CASE OF MONTAUKETT RECOGNITION**

The previous chapter highlights a brief history of colonial Long Island, and how the transformation of the landscape began the process of artificially erasing signs of the indigenous population from it. This chapter discusses both the historical and ongoing struggles of the Montaukett people – individuals native to southeast Long Island – to be recognized as a sovereign nation by the State of New York. It examines the events leading up to and taking place after the 1910 court case in which Judge Abel Blackmar declared the Montaukett people, and thus, their identity, extinct in the eyes of New York State. It acknowledges the continued existence of the Montaukett people and argues that the process of nation-building, as described in Chapter 2 and expanded upon slightly in this chapter, contributed to this series of events. As the landscape was altered by the colonists and the United States and indigenous people were increasingly made to appear as if they had been removed from the landscape (peacefully, of course, in the eyes of the colonists and their descendants), it became easier for judges to decide upon legal rulings against the Montaukett, specifically in cases arguing against their continued existence as a tribe/people.

The process through which the Montaukett were declared extinct is one of nationalism. Building a nation or a national identity of people requires a concerted effort. Benedict Anderson (2016) claims that no nation or community is able or willing to join hands with every single person. There are limits to who may claim to belong to a certain nation. Don Mitchell (2000, 62) echoes this in his description of the feeling of belonging and active exclusion being key to the nation building process, arguing that people within a nation identify themselves not only by the identities they share, but also by describing

those identities that are not present in the nation. A national identity is shared by only a select group fitting into certain criteria.

This process is instrumental in the erasure of indigenous communities. The last chapter strives to show how the colonists reimagined and defined the landscape in ways that reified their own perception of the world. The colonists were able to use that changing landscape to imagine the indigenous population as being outside of their system, and, through processes of genocide and misleading treaties or theft of land, demonstrated that only certain people fit within their national framework. As the colonies transitioned to the United States, the work of nationalism continued. Chapter four discusses in more detail how the landscape today is built around ideas of the nation and who exists within it. In building up the US, many indigenous communities and identities were attacked. The praising and uplifting of the “American Spirit” in visible and ostentatious ways directly contributed to the hiding of indigenous people, paving the way for the modern dispossession of land.

Today, indigenous nations need to be *recognized* by the US or the state they are within in order to receive certain rights and autonomy. This involves US or NY (if in the state of NY) officials seeing the indigenous nation, recognizing the people as belonging to that nation, and then extending whatever legal standings are needed. As is the case in the Montaukett example, this process is always ongoing and struggled over. As the US expanded and towns were built up, the territory the Montaukett held on to diminished until, in 1910, NY decided that they no longer had any right to the land that they claimed. Nations are built through the landscape, and in the process of building the US, the

Date	Event
1648	English colonists take 30,000 acres of land from Montaukett. Establish East Hampton (Strong, 1992, 3).
1659	Plague estimated to have killed 2/3rds of indigenous people (Strong, 1994, 565)
1686	Governor Thomas Dongan recognizes the right of the English to buy Montauk land. Creates a body of public officials to supervise relations with native groups. A deal guaranteeing some rights was reached the following year (Strong, 1992, 4)
1700	Montauketts are forced to move to Indian Fields. The land was owned by colonists and was rented out to the Montauketts (Matthews, 2018, 35)
1703	New deals made solidifying certain rights after the Montaukett attempt to sell all their land to Rip Van Dam in response to unkept promises made by English (Strong, 1992, 4)
1719	East Hampton bans marriages between Montaukett and whites (Matthews, 2018, 35). Non-Montaukett Natives prohibited from living on or owning Montauk land (Strong, 1992, 6).
1764	Petition by Silas Charles to Lt. Gov. and Commander-in-Chief of the Province of NY and Territories to return all land on Montauk Point to the Montaukett as a response to white property owners ignoring the 1703 treaty (Hittman, 1979, 50).
1800	Benjamin and Stephen Pharaoh petition NY, arguing that the 1703 agreement is unfair that the Montaukett are starving and lack resources (Hittman, 1979, 51).
1808- 1818	NY Senate and Assembly uphold 1703 agreement but claim Montaukett do not need additional legislative help. State Assembly appoints Samson Occum (a Mohegan reverend) to act as Montaukett overseer (Hittman, 1979, 51-52).
1851	East Hampton trustees sued for taking fees from hunting privileges on Montauk and putting them in the town coffers. Court recognizes rights of the Montaukett (Strong, 1992, 9).
1871	Courts rule on an 1870 lawsuit against the East Hampton trustees by the Montaukett for cutting down Montaukett timber. Judge rules against Montaukett but explicitly recognizes them as a tribe (Strong, 1992, 10).
1878	Grinnell v. Baker: Judge O. Dykman rules Montaukett residence/planting rights protected, though proprietors can sell common land (Strong, 1992, 10).
1879	Arthur Benson is sold 9,200 acres of Montaukett Land along the beach (Hittman, 1979, 54).
1893	Benson has Montaukett sign away land. Sells to developers and the Long Island Railroad (Strong, 1992, 10)
1896	Wyandank Pharaoh organizes Montaukett to sue Benson (Strong, 1992, 10-11).
1910	Judge Abel Blackmar declares the Montauk Tribe extinct (Montauk Tribe of Indians).
1910- 1918	The Montaukett appeal the Judge Blackmar decision three times. None are successful. (Strong, 1992, 12.)

2013	NYS Assembly approved the “Montaukett Act” which would have reversed the 1910 ruling. Governor Andrew Cuomo vetoes it (Jeremynative).
2017	State Legislature passed legislation recognizing Montauketts that was again vetoed by Governor Andrew Cuomo (Dennis, J).

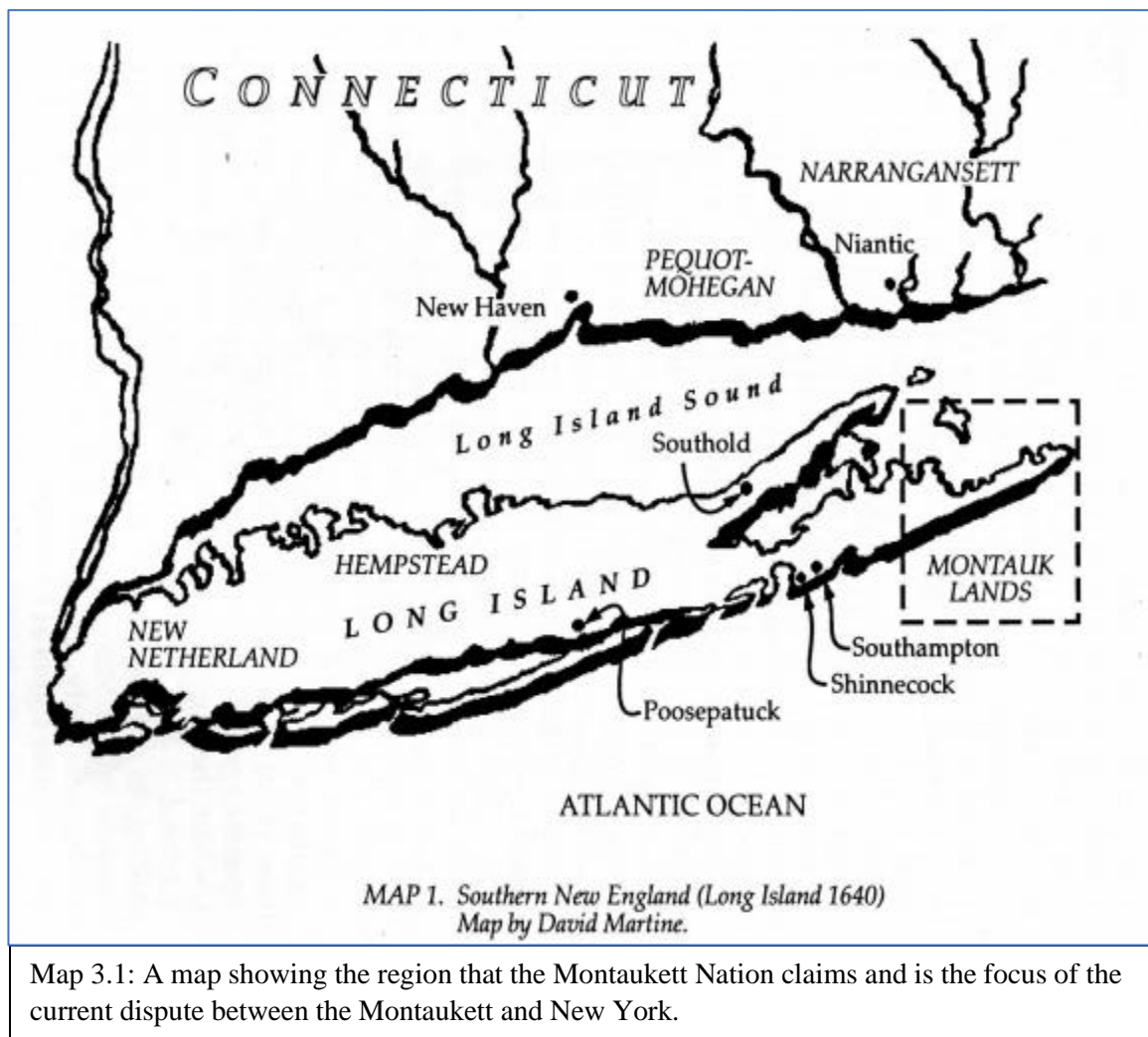
Table 3.1: Timeline of important events leading up to and resulting from the 1910 court decision in which Judge Abel Blackmar declared that the Montaukett tribe was extinct.

indigenous population of Long Island had their land taken away, which, in turn, made them invisible in the eyes of white Long Islanders and New Yorkers today.

The fact that indigenous groups still exist and struggle for basic recognition throughout New York today cannot be overstated. Outside of Long Island, the Onondaga nation paddled from Troy to the United Nations building in New York City in 2013 to demand the renewal of the “Two Row” treaty between the Iroquois Confederacy and the colonists. This treaty was first made 400 years ago, but has since been ignored by NY (Kimmerer, 2015). The Matinecock Nation on the North Shore still struggles for recognition, their website claiming that although “Matinnecoeks experienced profound changes after the seventeenth century...they did not vanish; they are still an identifiable people” (Matinecock Tribal Nation). In the 1960’s Ann Harding Murdock (Sun Tama) had actually tried to reclaim Matinecock land in the town of Huntington, though she was unsuccessful (Strong, 1994, 60). The Montaukett Nation is one of many groups attempting to reclaim land and reassert their presence to a government that refuses to see them.

The Montaukett Nation, as shown in Map 3.1, occupied an area of land on the south fork of Long Island that ranged from the modern town of East Hampton to the very end of the island. In terms of the history of the nation, the Montaukett agree with John

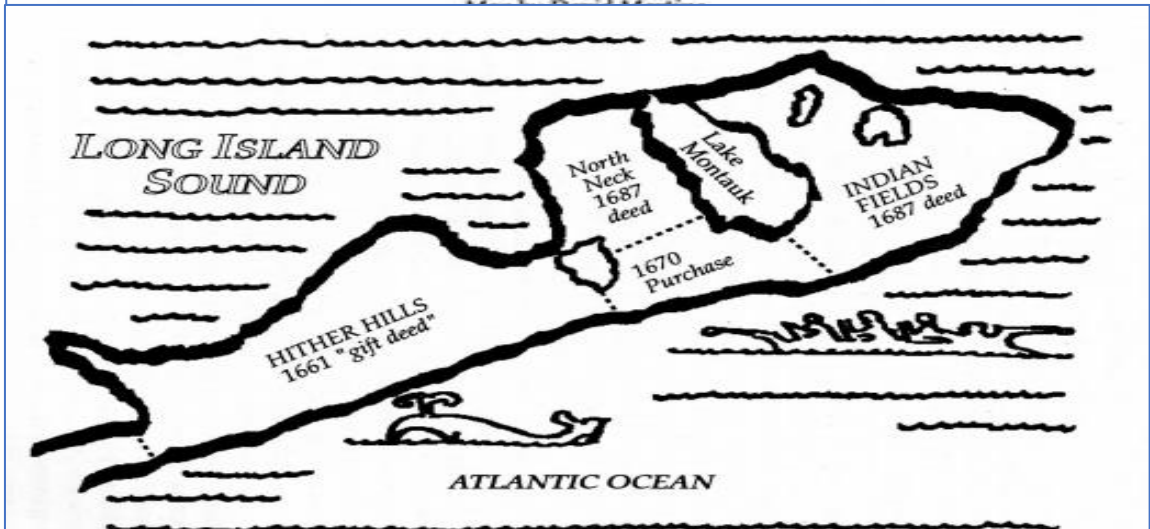
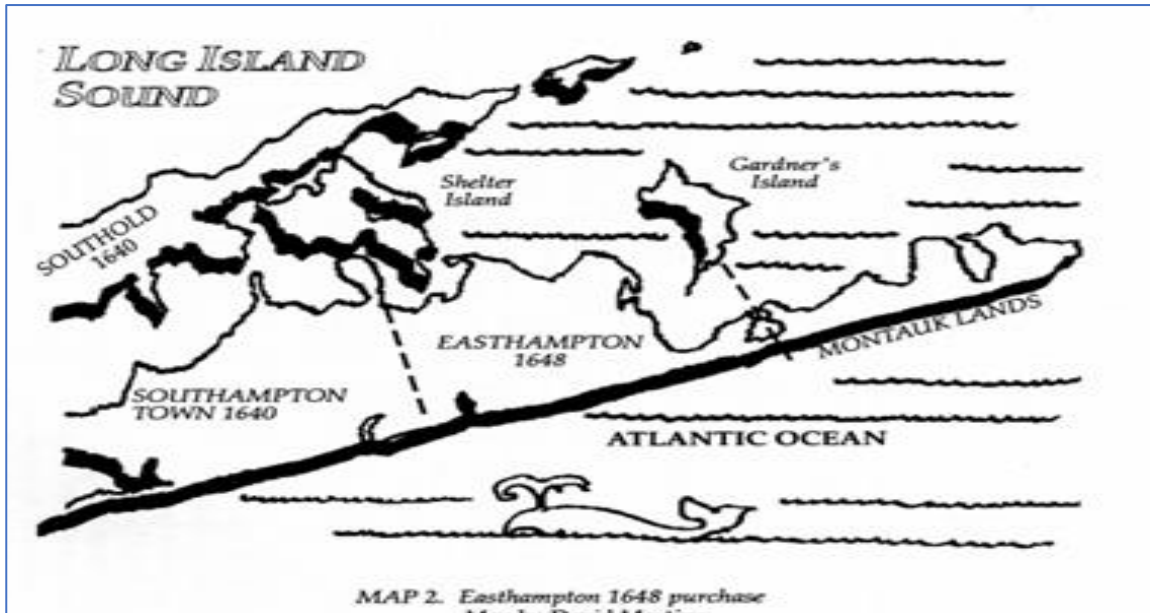
Strong in his assertion that no tribes existed until after European contact. The Matouwac Research Center, the research division of the Montaukett Nation, states, “in our opinion, the concept of a confederacy of ‘tribes’ on Long Island formed to defend themselves against the ‘fierce’ mainland tribes is of colonial origin. From a native perspective, we believe that a single nation occupied the Eastern Long Island territory – and they had nothing to fear from other nations until the European conquerors arrived and destroyed the balance of power that served the Algonkians of the North-east for thousands of years” (Matouwac). As we saw in chapter 2, the arrival of the European colonists and the division of the land in ways that made sense to the colonists and reproduced their own



worldview began the process of making the indigenous people invisible in what Hittman describes as a “disastrous two and one-half centuries (1630-1879) of land transactions, tributary requirements, restrictive legislation, and population decline” (Hittman, 1979, 50). Defining the landscape in European terms made it easier to incorporate the land and those living on the land into the colonial legal system, and to subsequently take the land and pass judgement on who has the right to live and work there. Dividing the indigenous people into different groups and limiting their ability to support one another made it easier for white colonists to continuously enact more oppressive regulations and verdicts to the point in which – as was the case in the 1910 Blackmar decision - the “Indian presence on the landscape has been obscured by our inability to recognize individuals as Indians” (Mancini, 2015, 162).

The town of East Hampton was established in 1648 after the English had purchased 30,000 acres of land from the Montaukett (East Hampton). By 1670, most of the Montaukett land had been bought, and the people were relegated to smaller regions containing only their “principal settlements and planting grounds” (Strong, 1992, 4). One of these regions on Montauk Point was known as Indian Fields, which, as seen in Map 3.2, was cut off from the rest of the island by the English and was never a fully legal or autonomous reservation (Matthews, 2018, 35). As the colonists were pushing the indigenous population further east, Governor Thomas Dongan, in 1686, recognized the right of the English to buy lands from the Montaukett and established “a body of public officials called ‘trustees’ to supervise and monitor all relations with Native Americans” (Strong, 1992, 4). If this group was supposed to protect Montaukett land, the effort failed. In 1687, a year after they were established, the trustees bought the remainder of the

Montaukett land. However, they did agree to guarantee the rights of the current Montaukett, as well as their ancestors, to live on the land and plant crops there in perpetuity, even though they no longer “owned” the land in the eyes of the English (Strong, 1992, 4). In light of the 1910 Blackmar ruling and the recent veto of two bills passed in the NY government recognizing the Montaukett tribe’s continued existence, it



is safe to say that these rights have not been guaranteed in “perpetuity.” Future land sales would push them out of Indian Fields and force them to fracture and find spaces within white villages (Matthews, 2018, 39).

Even before the 1910 court case the Montaukett knew that their rights were not being protected, and took some interesting steps to demonstrate their displeasure to the English. In 1703, the Montaukett attempted to sell all of their land to the Dutch, prompting a strong response by the English who, in an attempt to cancel the deal and maintain their own claim to the Southern Fork, renegotiated their agreements with the Montaukett and reaffirmed certain rights (Strong, 1992, 4). Though restricting the Montaukett to a stretch of land between what was known as the Great Pond and the Fort Pond and placing the land more concretely in English control, the agreement reached in 1703 allowed the Montaukett to retain some rights in the surrounding area at certain points of the year during which the English were not utilizing the land (Hittman, 1979, 50).

However, most expectedly, those rights were not honored by the English. In a landscape to which the Montaukett only had access for a part of the year, the deals they had made, as well as the needs of their people were quickly ignored, and additional measures to aid in the disintegration of the Montaukett society were made by the English. In 1719 marriages between Montauketts and non-Montauketts were made illegal in an effort by colonists to hurt the social reproduction of the indigenous society (Matthews, 2018, 35). This policy was an attempt to keep the indigenous population from expanding. It also aided the narrative of the vanishing Indian that would come later, propelling laws limiting land claims only to those individuals who could prove that they were “full-



blooded Montauketts” (Matthews, 2018, 35). The East Hampton Trustees also passed laws restricting who could live on Montaukett land. Individuals who were not a part of the tribe and were unable to claim descendancy from it were not only banned from marrying tribal members but were also barred from living on or using any of the land at Montauk, harming the ability of the tribe to maintain its population and, subsequently, pass along its customs and sense of identity. In 1754, a law passed prohibiting any Montaukett women who married outside of the tribe to claim to be of Montaukett descent, forfeiting all rights granted to them by the tribe, such as living on the South Fork (it also prohibited their children from claiming that lineage as well). Those who remained on Montaukett land were arrested and prosecuted. These bans were part of a series of restrictions bent upon diminishing the size of the Montaukett. The East Hampton Trustees had been advised by various governmental authorities to designate an official reservation in Montauk so as to better supervise tribal affairs and trade, but instead they decided to actively pursue measures to speed along what they viewed as the inevitable extinction of the Montaukett (Strong, 1992, 6). Not only did they face laws restricting their movement and practices, but the people who had lived in Indian Fields were not even recorded in the census until 1870, long after they had been forced from that location. Even then, they were not listed as Montaukett in the census, as they did not live on a legal reservation, but were categorized as “free POC,” effectively negating their presence to anyone who might read the censuses (Matthews, 2018, 37). The census as a tool, according to Benedict Anderson, allowed the colonial state to “put down deep social and institutional roots as the colonial state multiplied its size and functions. Guided by its imagined map it organized the new educational, juridical, public-health, police, and

immigration bureaucracies it was building on the principle of ethno-racial hierarchies” (Anderson, 2016, 169). On Long Island the misrepresentation of the Montaukett and other indigenous groups did not diminish these racial hierarchies, but actually made it easier for white Long Islanders to ignore treaties such as the 1703 agreement on the basis that the Montaukett were extinct and those claiming otherwise were simply part of the umbrella grouping of “free POC.” Though the Montaukett still exist today, this process of restrictive actions through laws and the census made them disappear from the landscape even more, contributing to further oppression and claims by colonists and members of the US that they were no longer there.

Despite the attempts to make the Montaukett increasingly invisible, members of the tribe fought against the continued violations against the 1703 treaty and the treaty that had guaranteed their right to residency and planting in perpetuity. A petition to the Lt. Gov. and Commander-in-Chief of the Province of NY and Territories was made in 1764 by Silas Charles, a member of the Montaukett Nation (Hittman, 1979, 50). He argued that the nation should be given back all of the land that it had occupied on Montauk Point. The argument continued with a petition put forward by Benjamin and Stephen Pharaoh, referencing the increasing restriction of Montaukett to ever decreasing land areas and the unbalanced use of resources in the area. The English had over 2000 cattle grazing in the area while the Montaukett were allowed only 50. After years of deliberation, the NY Senate decided in 1808 that the 1703 agreement was a valid treaty that needed to be respected, but that the Montaukett needed no further legislative assistance. In 1818, this decision was supported by the NY Assembly, though they also decided that the Montaukett needed the assistance of someone outside of their society, arguing that they

were declining from their “want of industry and good economy, having always been accustomed to idle habits” (Hittman, 1979, 52). At that point, Samsun Occum, a Christian reverend from the Mohegan Tribe, was sent to live with the Montaukett and help them to better transition to a style of living more in line with the English’s perspective.

Throughout the years, there were a number of court cases in which the Montaukett generally lost more and more certain rights, all the while maintaining their recognition by the US. In 1851, the East Hampton trustees were sued for taking fees paid by the Montaukett and putting the money into accounts earmarked for the town itself. (Strong, 1992, 9). Another case in 1871 ruled in favor of the trustees who were sued for chopping Montaukett timber. Though the Montaukett lost, they did have some rights recognized in the case. A few years later in 1878, their rights to residency and planting were yet again protected by Judge Dykman, though the case ensured that common land could still be sold by proprietors.

Just as the 1703 agreement was largely ignored, so too were the court decisions in which the right of residency was often affirmed. In 1879, the East Hampton Trustees sold over 9,200 acres of land to Arthur Benson, a businessman (Hittman, 1979, 54). Though he was required to respect the rights of the Montaukett to remain on his newly acquired land, he instead facilitated their speedy removal (Matthews, 2018, 39). Having purchased land in Freetown, a village established for non-whites north of East Hampton by John Lyon Gardiner, Benson moved the Montaukett out of Indian Fields and to the village, claiming that their rights to residency were maintained in the fact that they still were able to live, if not on their own land, nearby. By 1885, all of the remaining Montaukett had been moved to Freetown. Following their removal, Benson began to sell the land to

developers. In 1893, Benson sold what remained to the Long Island Railroad – a transaction which would lead to Wyandank Pharaoh gathering the Montaukett for yet another lawsuit (Strong, 1992, 10).

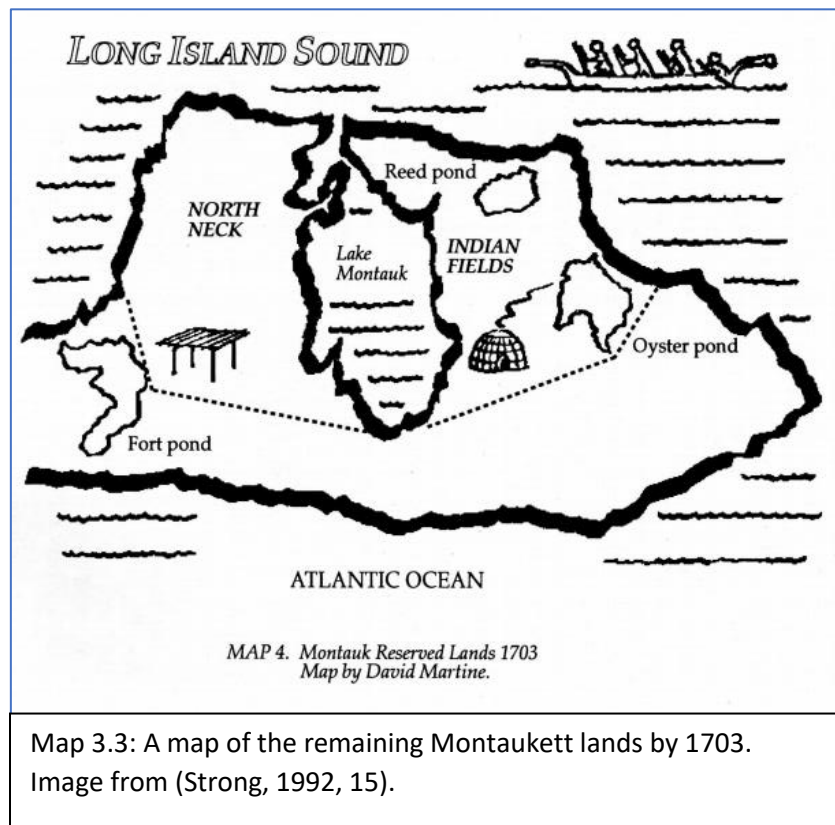
The fight to reclaim their lands from Benson led to the 1910 court ruling made by Judge Abel Blackmar. Though the 1777 NY Constitution section 37 article 1 certifies that the State Legislature must approve the sale and purchase of Indigenous land, Judge Blackmar ruled that the land sale was legal. The basis of this decision was that the land that was sold by Benson was, in Judge Blackmar's view, not Montaukett land, but was in fact privately owned, and therefore could be sold (Strong, 1992, 11). The tribe was extinct. According to the Matouwac Research Center, the statement made by Judge Blackmar when he delivered his verdict declared that "there is now no tribe of Montauk Indians. It has disintegrated and been absorbed into the mass of citizens. If I may use the expression, the tribe has been dying for many years." In order to support his claim that the Montaukett were extinct, Judge Blackmar explained that "the number of the Indians was greatly reduced. Their blood became so mixed that in many of them Indian traits were obliterated. They had no internal government, and they lived a sort of shiftless life, hunting, fishing, cultivating the ground 'Indian fashion' as a witness called it, and often leaving for long periods and working in some menial capacity for the whites" (Matouwac).

Not only did the court case rule the sale of Montaukett legal, but Judge Blackmar was the first individual to claim with authority in a legal setting that the tribe had disintegrated to the point in which it no longer existed, making a claim about what did and did not constitute an Indigenous Nation. Essentially, according to the Matouwac

Research Center, “in Riverhead State Supreme Court he threw out the Montaukett case stating that the Montauketts no longer existed as an Indian tribe – hence by inference the ‘Negroes’ in his courtroom were not entitled to make claims against a land that once belonged to a now extinct people.” The people in the courtroom who had filed the lawsuit were not members of any indigenous nation, but just another group of what the 1870 census would describe as “free POC” trying to take land that belonged to a group that was once known as the Montaukett. Though Wyandank Pharaoh and other members of the Montaukett Nation stood in that courtroom as Judge Blackmar delivered his decision, they were not seen as being of the Montaukett Nation. They were, for all intents and purposes, invisible.

This decision was not taken lightly by the members of the Montaukett Nation.

Their website claims that “we [the Montaukett] have never surrendered, nor will we ever surrender, our tribal identity, heritage, culture, kinship, and sovereignty” (Montauk Tribe of Indians). Indeed, they did appeal the case.



The first appeal ended with the judge agreeing with Judge Blackmar, while the second and third appeal, which occurred in 1917 and 1918 respectively, were both denied without any comments (Strong, 1992, 12).

Efforts to regain recognition did not end there. In 2013, the NY Legislature passed a bill that would “give the Montauketts a path to restore state recognition” (Dennis, J). However, Governor Andrew Cuomo, the current governor of NY, vetoed the bill. In subsequent years, another bill that pertained to the recognition of the Montaukett were passed by the NY Legislature and again vetoed by Gov. Cuomo: Senate Bill S7770, and Assembly Bill AA9898. The bill was passed unanimously by both the senate and the assembly before being vetoed in 2017. According to the New York State Senate Website, the Bill “provides for state recognition and acknowledgement of the Montaukett Indians; provides that the Montaukett Indians shall have a chief or sachem, three tribal trustees and a tribal secretary; further provides for the qualification of voters; makes related provisions.” Currently, another bill (Assembly Bill A4069) with the same summary as S7770 is in Assembly Committee. Moving forward, it will be interesting to see if this new bill goes the same way as the previous ones: passing the Senate and the Assembly only to be vetoed by Gov. Cuomo.

As this chapter shows, the Montaukett struggle for recognition as a distinct indigenous nation and people is not one that is relegated only to the past. It began as soon as the colonists arrived on Long Island and continues today. Beyond being a legal matter, it is also a matter of public awareness. Being recognized legally is impacted by whether or not the Nation is recognized by other inhabitants of Long Island, including both those who make legal decisions, and those who do not. That awareness, as chapters 2 and 4

strive to demonstrate, is impacted by how the landscape presents the people who live in it. The Montaukett struggle played out in courtrooms and state legislative bodies, but it has also played out in how the census has historically and continues to record the population. It plays out in the land treaties and in settlements such as Freetown that were built in order to create an accessible yet invisible source of labor for white communities. It also plays out, as chapter four shows, in museums and by landmarks peppering the landscape catering to a colonial perspective of the land. Those features that project the narrative of a white, European descendant culture, glorifying colonial figures, emphasizing misleading, false, or racist histories and hiding the truth of a people who continue to live on this Island all contribute to the decisions of individuals like Judge Blackmar and Governor Cuomo in claiming that the Montaukett and other indigenous groups exist only in the past. They are not only physical structures can be visited or viewed from afar, but active agents in the creation of the place of Long Island, influencing how people who happen to see these landmarks view and participate in the communities they believe they are a part of - communities that exclude the indigenous people and ignore their struggles and the ways in which other Long Islanders contribute to those struggles.

Chapter 4 explores specific cases of “historical” and cultural representation in the modern Long Island landscape in the form of monuments and museums and discusses how they inform and direct the population’s actions and beliefs today and their perception of the island’s history. It argues that these physical manifestations in the landscape actively shape how we talk and think about the past, and how we imagine ourselves and our society today. It focuses on features in the landscape that I have found

or have become aware of through the process of writing this thesis and attempts to think through what narratives they are telling, and what impact those narratives have on Long Island.



## CHAPTER 4. LANDMARKS OF LONG ISLAND AND THE STORIES THEY TELL

In Chapter 1, I emphasized my own lack of knowledge of my home that spurred the writing of this thesis. Through a trip to Letchworth State Park and a Facebook post, I realized that I did not know much about the historical and ongoing struggles of indigenous people on this island where I have grown up and lived all my life. The island that I saw and thought I knew was not one that accurately represented all of its inhabitants, but instead supported only a portion of them. This chapter is an exploration of certain landmarks that I either did not really think much of before starting the thesis, or, in the case of the Underhill Memorial and road, did not even know existed. I have taken the landscape for granted for most of my life. This is an attempt to begin to think more critically about some of these landmarks while keeping in mind the ideas of nationalism and landscape, the dispossession and manufactured invisibility of the Montaukett people, and Long Island's colonial history as discussed in previous chapters, and the notion that "the things that landscape tries to hide, in its insistent fetishization, are the *relationships* that go into its making" (Mitchell, 2000, 104). This chapter asks what impacts these landmarks have on the cultural identity of Long Island while keeping in mind that cultural identity shapes the lives that people are able to lead and potential sources of oppression. How do they inform our collective vision of who constitutes a Long Islander? How do they hide certain narratives and people?

National identity is built by those with power altering the landscape in an attempt at presenting one cohesive, unifying image to those who interact with and live in that space. This image is present within the landscape in various forms: monuments,

museums, parades and even pieces of writing such as books or newspapers that narrate the tales of what takes place in – for lack of a better term - a certain territory. These tales tell stories with certain messages and ideologies and occupy space that could otherwise be used to tell different stories. The stories that are told influence the people who come into contact with them, shaping/directing their behaviors and actions. All of these spatial features present some aspects of society as being “natural” or as more important than other aspects/narratives/identities, all while erasing the memory of certain groups, identities and ideologies that do not align entirely with the image the society is trying to promote. Because of their influence, nations, institutions and people with power will use these features in order to further their own ideologies. This chapter will explore how monuments, museums, and other features of the landscape shape and direct the modern population of Long Island towards a collective nationalistic mindset that purposely excludes the indigenous people in the pursuit of a white, European identity, and how they may also induce the forgetting of certain aspects of society that the nation determines are detrimental or antithetical to the single cohesive ideology/image it is trying to present.

Before diving into the specifics of Long Island, I want to continue discussing the concept of Landscape. Mitchell (2000, 99) describes the landscape as both “a place and a ‘way of seeing’,” while Kong (1997, 219-229) describes the landscape as being more than a backdrop – inviting the visual consumption of meanings placed in it, thereby creating a sense of collective or shared identity. The landscape provides a context, a stage, boundaries directing the people within that landscape how to act and behave (Mitchell, 2000, 102). Mitchell argues that the landscape is not something entirely natural, but rather something that is acted upon and created by those with the power to

shape it in order to “*control* meaning and to channel it in particular directions.” (Mitchell, 2000, 100). The power to build the landscape and determine what symbols are present within it are important because “what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth” (Basso, 1996, 7). The landscape not only informs our history, but also our present. We as humans learn from our history. Ideally, we would learn not to repeat the mistakes of history. If, as it does on Long Island, the landscape depicts an imaginary colonial history in which white Europeans were benevolent and kind to the people whose land they knowingly stole rather than a true history of genocide and trespasses that were made against a population that did not naturally disappear (and continues to exist), then the identity derived from that landscape will necessarily be flawed and contribute to the continued subjugation of the oppressed population. By ignoring and hiding the oppression of the indigenous community in the past, the modern landscape helps white Long Island ignore the oppression of the indigenous community today.

With respect to monuments, Nuala Johnson’s (1995) article “Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography and Nationalism” provides an overview of the work that monuments do in shaping nationalistic narratives. Monuments are part of a system of traditions including festivals, rites, myths, and symbols that contribute to nation building. They are used to promote some identities while resisting others. The siting of the monuments (the specific place in which they are located, such as in a public square or a museum) is also something that impacts how the monument is able to impact those who view it and creates different meanings. In her article, Johnson uses the example of soviet monuments in Budapest to highlight her arguments. During World War Two, the Red

Army liberated Budapest from the Nazis, which subsequently led to communist control of Hungary until a revolt in 1956. By that point, there were already statues dedicated to communist figures and the Red Army throughout Budapest. While twenty of them had been removed by the time she wrote the article, the Red Army monument was put under police surveillance to ensure it remained in place. Advocates wanted to remember, regardless of what injustices occurred later, that the Red Army did force the Nazis from the city. The monuments that were removed from public spaces were put into a statue park where people could still visit and learn from them in a more educational setting (Johnson, 1995, 51).

Johnson's example highlights how monuments are able to promote narratives and memories while repressing others. The Red Army Monument is a selective reading of a historical period that represents the Red Army as liberators and does nothing to address any adverse effects of communist rule endured by the Hungarians. Its siting in a public space depicts it as representing something good and harmless. It was not built in a place that acknowledges the Red Army's role as oppressors in addition to liberators. Johnson argues that selective readings such as these are attempts by the nation to heal collective wounds (Johnson, 1995, 61). However, rather than heal those wounds, the publicity of this statue does more to repress those wounds.

The process by which nations go about forgetting the past is also discussed by Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson (2019) in their article "Confederate Monuments and the Problem of Forgetting." The paper revolves around a class that they had taught together that was concerned with the processes through which monuments are used to forget histories that are detrimental to nationalist ideals. They argue that the landscape

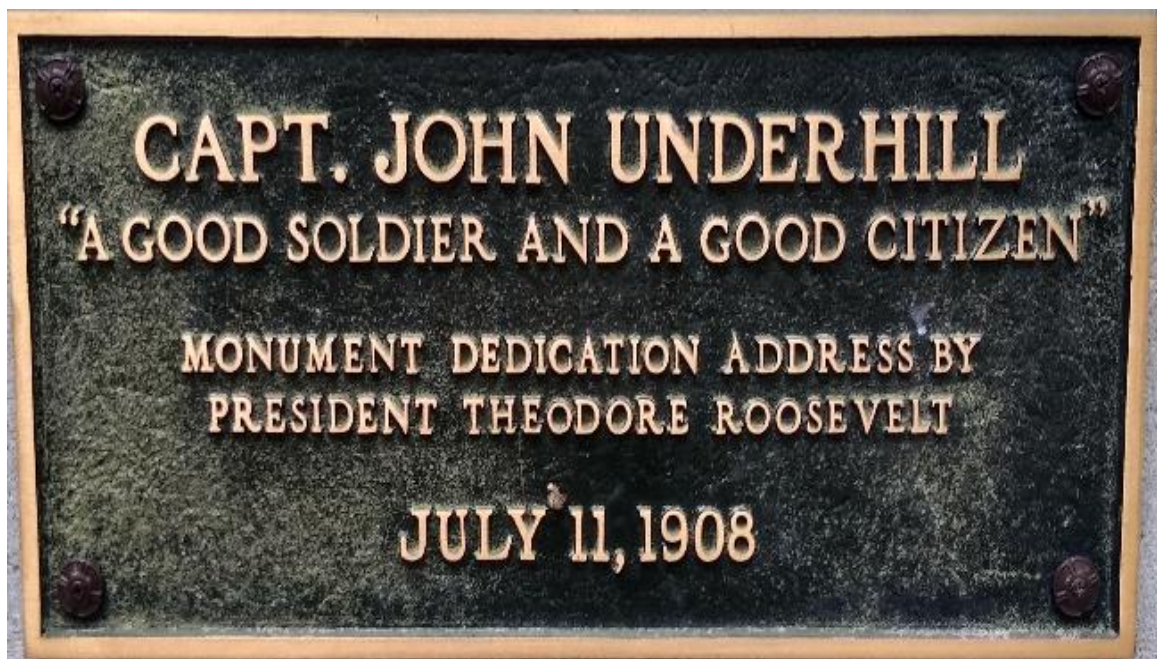
acts as a historical archive through its use of symbols, and that it is not neutral.

Monuments are actively put into landscapes in order to advocate for or forget a certain position. According to Forest and Johnson, there are two methods of forgetting that monuments can contribute to: repressive erasure and prescriptive forgetting. Forest and Johnson describe repressive erasure as an attempt to re-write history imposed on the masses by those with power (governments or institutions). Prescriptive forgetting, on the other hand, is a process that involves discussions between elected officials and the community concerning the thing that is trying to be cast from a community's collective memory. Monuments placed in the landscape can be used as tools for either repressive or prescriptive forgetting. What we remember and how we remember it "plays a fundamental role in the transmission and transformation of society" (Winter, 2011, 393). Remembering past injustices and acknowledging them as injustices aids societies in seeing and recognizing current oppressive systems, behaviors, and practices.

On Long Island, there are a number of monuments and memorials depicting various histories and identities. One such memorial located in Oyster Bay is the memorial to Captain John Underhill, a soldier and figure in the colonial government. Memorials, according to Professor Katherine Hite at a lecture given on at Vassar College on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, are built in order to signal to the public that the subject of the memorial should be mourned (as opposed to the subjects of monuments who are to be celebrated). At the same lecture, sculptor Vinnie Bagwell described monuments and memorials as stories or narratives that are designed to engage the viewer and tell them what the community is and who is in the community. The Underhill Memorial is one such story embedded into the landscape of Oyster Bay.

The memorial was commissioned by the Underhill Society, an organization formed in the late 1800's during a period in which many genealogical societies formed (Boerner, 2020, Interview). According to the Underhill Society's official website, the goal of the organization is to "widen public recognition of Captain John Underhill as an outstanding historical colonial figure and his achievements as such." With this goal in mind, the memorial was built in 1907 in the Underhill Burial Ground and was dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. As seen in Photograph 4.1, the plaque adorning the memorial declares that it was constructed as "a tribute of respect and esteem." The dedication plaque offers quotes President Roosevelt who said that Captain Underhill was "a good soldier, a good citizen."

So, who was Captain Underhill? I first learned of the Captain on the town of Southold's website. When detailing the history of Southold's founding, the website states



Photograph 4.1: The dedication plaque on the Underhill Memorial. The plaque reads: "Capt. John Underhill / 'A good soldier and a good citizen' / Monument dedication address by President Theodore Roosevelt / July 11, 1908).

that “the settlers brought in the famous (infamous?) Indian fighter, John Underhill, to live in the center of the community at Feather Hill. Fortunately, the Corchaugs were few in number, peace loving and helpful so Underhill’s services were not needed for long” (Town of Southold). Though Captain Underhill is not mentioned beyond that passage, the characterization of the indigenous population as peace loving and helpful and the use of the term “services” is particularly striking. With only the merest hint at expressing that there are conflicting views on the Captain’s role in the colonial US, the town of Southold chooses to represent him as if he were hired to do just another job rather than violently fight the native people. In Mystic Connecticut, Captain Underhill led English troops in a massacre of the Pequot people before being recruited to help the Dutch continue fighting the indigenous people on Long Island in the 1640’s (Strong, 1992, 55). Though there was a period of fighting, Captain Underhill also participated in preemptive and unprovoked attacks such as one on Fort Massapequa (Boerner, Interview). This attack resulted in the deaths of over 500 men, women and children (Strong, 1994, 563). Captain Underhill is described by Leighton “Blue Sky” Delgado in an article written for the Matouwac Research center as having declared that the “Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents.” Rather than suggest that Captain Underhill offered certain “services,” Delgado labels his actions as genocide and mass murder, and shares a picture depicting the Captain slaughtering the indigenous people (Figure 4.1). This characterization is seconded by Laurence M. Hauptman who wrote that Captain Underhill was a “truly disturbed individual,” citing his military campaigns which “resulted in merciless slaughters of men, women, and children” (Hauptman, 1992, 101).



Figure 4.1: An image depicting Captain Underhill fighting Indigenous Americans shared by the Matouwac Research Center with the label “Underhill Slaughtering Indians.” Image taken from: [http://www.montaukwarrior.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/fort\\_neck\\_slaughter.jpg](http://www.montaukwarrior.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/fort_neck_slaughter.jpg)

The memorial offers its own images in the form of two murals on opposite sides of the structure. Photograph 4.2 shows Captain Underhill holding a book with the words “love one another” on the cover, preaching to a group of indigenous people sitting in front of him. Photograph 4.3 shows the second mural in which Captain Underhill is riding into battle against the indigenous people who are coming from the forest while another group of people, potentially settlers, occupies a peaceful village setting. According to the Underhill Archivist, Mr. Steve Boerner, many members of the family were unhappy with the second mural, feeling that it over-emphasized the violence surrounding the Captain and portrayed him in a bad light. However, as a “tribute of respect and esteem” (as declared by the plaque on the memorial) the argument could be made that the murals and the actions they depict are in fact examples of what the Underhill Society considers to be great achievements made by, as they say, an “outstanding historical colonial figure.”





Photograph 4.2: A mural on the Underhill Memorial depicting Captain John Underhill preaching to a group of indigenous Long Islanders. The book he holds has the writing “love one another” inscribed on it.

Altogether, the memorial presents a man prosletyzing and killing the indigenous population and claims that he deserves respect and recognition for his deeds. It strengthens the narrative on Long Island that our colonial past is something to be revered while repainting in a form of repressive forgetting) the assaults against the indigenous population as something that contributes to the society that Captain Underhill is praised as being a citizen of.

If the memorial itself were not explicit enough, the Underhill Society also produced a written document praising Underhill for his violent actions. The document describes the result of the attack on Fort Massapequa, explaining that “the redmen were



Photograph 4.3: A second mural on the Underhill Memorial depicting Captain John Underhill killing indigenous people who are fleeing into the woods, while some individuals (possibly colonists) occupy the space outside of a building.

exterminated, their huts fired. It was a roaring furnace within; certain death without,” and that “the terror of his name was felt in every Indian village between the Kennebec and the Great Lakes” (Underhill, 1926, 5-9). Despite these quotes, the document also claims that “historians have not done the soldier justice, but have repeated against him calumnies” (Underhill, 1926, 5). The difference between the paper produced by the Underhill Society and the article from the Matouwac research center lies not in the description of the violence that Captain Underhill perpetrated, but how they interpret that violence. The memorial contributes to the continuing narrative that the actions of the colonists were justified and righteous, hiding the perspective of the indigenous population in order to highlight what the Society is attempting to portray as noble accomplishments. Hauptman

(1992, 102) agrees with this, saying that the dedication plaque at the memorial serves as an attempt to overlook or justify Captain Underhill's actions. Not only are his actions excused, but by honoring them the memorial serves colonialism and actively adds to the work of nationalism in continuing to prop up systems of dispossession.

In addition to the monument, Captain Underhill is also commemorated in Locust Valley, NY, with a street named after him (as seen in Photograph 4.4). Street names are very



Photograph 4.4: Underhill Road is a small street in Locust Valley, NY.

similar to monuments in that they are often used to honor an individual who has passed away and communicate something about that individual to the people using the street. While not all streets are named after individuals, “when used for commemorative purposes, street names and the version of history they introduce into the public sphere belong to the semiotic makeup of local and national identity and to the structures of power and authority” (Azaryahu, 2009, 53). Street names are a way of imprinting memories and ideologies into the minds of the people in an everyday and utilitarian manner. They are never named to dishonor or condemn an individual, but rather celebrate their and “connote a certain ideology about what should be commemorated and where” (Azaryahu, 2009, 56). Though there is no plaque alongside the street sign describing the atrocities committed by Captain Underhill as “good,” the fact that his name appears on

the sign indicates to the public that someone named Underhill aided the community (local or national) in some way.

Because it is a street name, Underhill road is used in everyday conversations. Indeed, “from the perspective of those in charge of molding the symbolic infrastructure of society, of primary importance is the integration of representations of the ruling sociopolitical order into networks of social communication” (Azaryahu, 2009, 54). In order to travel from one place to another, individuals need to travel along roads. Whether they listen to street names being spoken on their GPS, are following directions on a map or are talking with another person about how to get to point A from point B, people are being exposed to or communicating about the names represented by the streets. People grow acclimated to certain names and begin to form some sort of relationship to them, potentially recognizing the name and the uncomfortable legacy it holds or taking that name and legacy for granted. Most people do not pay much attention to things like street names, and yet they still hold some power in society’s collective memory and identity. The fact that people live on this street and either fail to recognize the name or fail to speak out against the name gives an indication of what sort of historical figures and actions are celebrated and ignore on Long Island.

The Underhill Memorial and Underhill Road are joined by a number of other landmarks attempting to present a certain image of Long Island. One particularly striking feature of the landscape is the towering statue (known by the locals as Chief Running Fair) representing an indigenous chief standing outside of the Riverhead Raceway, a racecar track on route 58, as seen in Figure 4.2. According to the *Riverhead News-Review*, the statue was bought by Jim and Barbara Cromarty, the owners of the Riverhead



Raceway, from the Old Danbury Fair in Connecticut in 1980. Since then, it has stood outside of the racetrack alongside the road, “arm frozen in perpetual salute” (Finn, 2012), catching the eye of travelers passing through the area.

The Riverhead Raceway statue is treated as something of a unique landmark. In a 2012 report regarding the damage the statue sustained during Hurricane Sandy, the *Riverhead News-Review* described the statue as “iconic,” and referred to its appearance in the tv show “The Sopranos.” Barbara Cromarty described how during the Suffolk County fair which they ran for twenty-five years, “we built a giant teepee to go with him and when we ran the Fair we used to use the teepee for the children. They would sit



Figure 4.2: The “Riverhead Raceway Indian” standing outside of the Riverhead Raceway. Image from: <https://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/files/Riverhead-Raceway-Indian-has-been-fixed-after-Hurricane-Sandy.jpg>

inside and we would have someone tell them about the history of Long Island Indians. It was great” (Finn, 2012). After it was damaged in Hurricane Sandy, Mrs. Cromarty explained that she and Jim were "so sad about our Indian...He was like part of the family” (Finn, 2012).

Though I am not aware of any work by academics analyzing the impact of this statue, the visibility of this statue is immense, and therefore worth noting. Don Mitchell (2001, 171) argues that visibility is an important aspect of creating and resisting certain cultures and social relations. Essentially, visibility of the landmark impacts the visibility of the subject that it represents. The more visible a landmark is, the more people will come to identify with the narrative that is telling and overlook or potentially reject the people who are not equally represented within the landscape or are actively hidden by landmarks that promote other identities, contributing to the exclusion and oppression of certain groups. By constructing monuments and other landmarks, humans mold the landscape into forms that support their vision of the world while keeping certain people from belonging. This element of visibility contributes to the determination of what does or does not belong in a landscape and how resistance to or the production of culture occurs. Spaces are created by making some ideas/concepts highly visible while muting others. Symbols are embedded into the landscape and help to create spaces in which concepts that are contrary to those symbols appear to not exist. (Mitchell, 2001, 173)

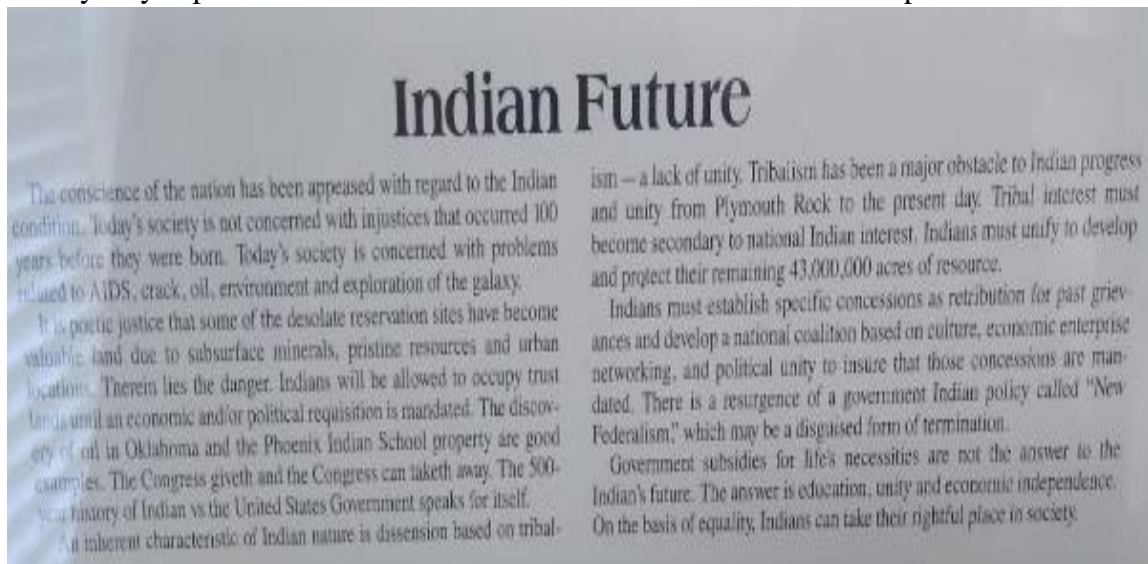
The siting of a monument or landmark also matters and impacts the story it tells those who view it (Forest, 2019, 129). Not only does it affect the visibility of the landmark, but the context of that particular feature changes the story that it tells. If the statue were not located alongside the highway next to a racing track but was instead

placed in a museum about country fairs, the story that it would be telling would be different. Different meanings permeate in different spaces and impact features that are placed within that landscape (Johnson, 1995, 55). Though the actual impact and intention of the Riverhead Raceway Statue is unclear, the fact that it is so visible and is connected to the raceway and actively used within the community helps to give a better understanding of its role in the creation and perpetuation of modern Long Island and the erasure of actual indigenous people.

In addition to statues and memorials, museums also contribute to the narratives nations try to tell. In Tim Cole's (2004) article "Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK," Cole takes a look at how three different Holocaust museums (in Israel, the US and the UK) contribute to their respective nation's identity. These museums may be about the same historical moment, but because they are situated in different locations, their meanings vary. The Yad Vashem in Israel conveys ideas of rebirth and the safety of nation simply because it is located in the Jewish nation established after the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the museum in the US (located in Washington DC) emphasizes the role of US soldiers liberating the concentration camps. Its location paired with images such as the words "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" at one of the entrances to the museum depict the Holocaust as something completely contrary to US ideals. It is a statement that is supposed to reflect national ideas of tolerance and action in the face of evil. Cole also emphasizes the fact that the museum does mention the US's failure to act earlier in the war, allowing the Holocaust to continue for longer than it would have otherwise. He also explains that its position in Washington DC signals to others that the

Holocaust is an important part of US history. The Holocaust Wing of the Imperial War Museum in the UK is largely described in the same way, though the fact that the Holocaust shares a building with exhibits depicting other wars the British fought in is, as Cole describes, a method of justifying British involvement in other wars. Ultimately, the Holocaust is not just depicted in a historical framework, but it is also instrumentalized in such a way as to justify nationalism (Cole, 2004, 143). In this way, museums (similarly to monuments) are selective historical narratives that are constructed in certain landscapes to promote certain notions of national identity.

There are a number of museums on Long Island that present certain narratives of the past. One such institution is the Southold Indian Museum that opened in 1962 and is located at 1090 Main Bayview Rd in the town of Southold. On November 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, I visited the museum. The main exhibit is all located in one room while a second room has some children's activities and some additional information regarding Long Island's history. My trip there focused on the main exhibit which consists of a plethora of artifacts



Photograph 4.5: The Southold Indian Museum explains the present struggles of the Native Americans through this poster, arguing that “tribalism” is responsible for their continued dispossession.



from the area. There are display cases filled with a plethora of pottery bits and arrows, Maps display the ranges of native groups based on “the best early observations of European explorers and settlers.” As has been argued in chapter 2, those early observations made by European settlers based on their own position on what society should be like, fundamentally overlooked the actual patterns of habitation on the island.

Eurocentrism seems to be infused in most aspects of the museum. The exhibits primarily focus on old artifacts, explaining how they were used and how the native people lived hundreds of years ago. Hidden behind a flag in the corner of the room is a small poster that mentions the “Indian Future,” the text of which can be seen in Photograph 4.5. This poster explains that “An inherent characteristic of Indian Nature is dissension based on tribalism – a lack of unity. Tribalism has been a major obstacle to Indian progress and unity from Plymouth Rock to the present day.” It continues, arguing that “Indians must establish specific concessions as retribution for past grievances,” and that if they manage to develop “unity, and economic dependence” by themselves without any assistance from the US government (ignoring the fact that the US government is actively responsible for recognizing and extending certain rights to Indigenous Nations, meaning that its support is necessary in legally achieving autonomy) then they will be able to “take their rightful place in society.” While not a major aspect of the museum, it is the only part of the exhibit that speaks to the present or future of Native Americans (while avoiding mentioning those people who are still on Long Island, opting for a vague notion of people throughout the US).

Chapter 2 demonstrated that tribalism was a European construct intended to facilitate the taking of land, and that before the colonists arrived there is little evidence

that major friction between different settlements on the island existed. The idea that indigenous Long Islander's need to "take their rightful place in society" ignores everything we know about how the colonists took their land and autonomy from them. How can the indigenous people be expected to take something that was wrongfully taken from them when the US refuses to acknowledge many of the injustices that occurred, let alone those that persist today? Just like the Underhill Memorial, accountability and a recognition of history are absent from this exhibit. The narrative presented blames the indigenous people for their own dispossession and their continued oppression. Instead of uplifting colonists like Captain Underhill and justifying genocide, the museum takes the approach of demonizing the victims, contributing to the nationalistic narrative of "us vs. them," fulfilling the description that Mitchell and Anderson propose of nationalism acting to exclude certain groups of people from its perception of itself. And, if museum goers miss that particular aspect of the museum, they will still be exposed to a confusing mix of country music and a highly visible exhibit of indigenous artifacts and clothing from the great plains in the middle of the continent, taking attention away from the local setting.

Based on these examples, it is little wonder that Bjorn believed the issues surrounding indigenous Long Island were long over. If we lift up figures like Captain Underhill as an upstanding citizen who sacrificed so much to bring religion and stability to Long Island, then how can we argue that the indigenous people were mistreated? If we berate the indigenous people for being tribalistic and responsible for their own misfortune, and display caricatures of them as racecar track accessories, then how can we argue that they even faced injustice in the first place? These narratives put forth by landmarks like the Underhill Memorial, the Riverhead Raceway statue and the Southold

Indian Museum are built on colonialism and, as has been stated throughout the thesis, are simply not true. Mitchell (2000, 144) proposes “‘landscape’ in all its fascinating complexity is best seen as a force in, and place for, the social production of society. Like ‘culture,’ landscape seeks to regularize or naturalize relations between people.” In a landscape full of misrepresentations, the truth itself appears to be false, and injustices are made to look just.

## **CONCLUSION. CLOSING WITH ANOTHER PERSONAL STORY ABOUT LONG ISLAND**

Just as my thesis began, so too does it end – with a story.

It felt only natural to go out to Montauk Point after having researched the ongoing struggle of the Montaukett people to be recognized by New York State. So, on March 6, 2021, my father, grandmother (yiayia) and I got in the car and made the journey east to the end of the island. This time, I travelled with a little bit more knowledge and awareness of what I was going to see. At this point, I have finished writing the first draft of the rest of my thesis, so I had been thinking about the landscape and nationalism and how the indigenous people of Long Island are hidden for a few months. What I found on this journey both confirmed some of my thoughts, and yet still managed to surprise me.

Within a few miles of the Montauk Lighthouse, you will notice signs along the road indicating how far you are from it. At the very end of the island, the lighthouse stands on a heavily eroded hillside overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Once you find a space to park (which, in the summer, is a Herculean task), you have to pass next to the gift shop in order to enter and exit the grounds.

Aside from the lighthouse, the grounds are home to a number of signs that teach visitors about the types of birds that pass through the area during their winter migration. Another sign has labeled diagrams of fish (which is very handy when you are standing on a hill).

In addition to the signs, there are two memorials. One is a small memorial on the side of the path that wraps around the lighthouse dedicated to Mariners and Coast Guard

who “perished” in World War II. At the very back of the lighthouse up against the edge of the hill stands a tall metal statue of a man standing in what appears to be half of a boat. This second statue is dedicated to those individuals who were lost to the waters around the point. Though I looked, there are no references to the Montaukett people on the grounds. It was not anything more than what I had expected.

However, the museum portion of the lighthouse does have an exhibit dedicated to the Montaukett. Due to Covid-19, I was unable to enter the museum, but on the Montauk Historical Society and the Lighthouse Museum’s website there is an option to take a virtual tour. The images are a bit blurry, and it is hard to make out the writing on many of the exhibits, but on one wall there are photographs of Montaukett people through which the words “proud descendants surviving the myth of extinction” run through. I want to reiterate that I could not go into the museum and read all of the placards in person, and so I do not want to make any definitive claims about the narrative of that exhibit and whether or not it describes the history of dispossession and the struggle for recognition accurately and honestly - after all, museums typically are thought to be institutions representing the past, not the present. But after my trip to the Southold Indian Museum which seemed more concerned about collecting artifacts than providing a clear history of the land, I felt optimistic learning about this exhibit (although this exhibit does appear to be at odds with the Montauk Historical Society website as seen in chapter 1). After the pandemic is over, I will have to make a point of going back there to visit the museum.

After we left the lighthouse, we traveled maybe fifteen minutes east to what is the remnants of Indian Field, the piece of land that the Montaukett were forced onto as the colonists expanded their territory, and eventually forced off of once Arthur Benson

bought and sold the land to developers. If not for my research, I would not have known it was there, and I am not sure how anyone else would know it was there. Unlike the Montauk Lighthouse, the cemetery is not a landmark that seems to have had any attention drawn to it. Despite being an important part of Long Island's history, it is well hidden from the public eye. It is at the end of a winding gravel road that constantly seems to be turning into someone's driveway. A few times I had stopped the car, unsure if I was still on the road or not, only continuing when my dad told me to keep going. Eventually, we did arrive at our destination.

It is now Indian Field Cemetery. A plaque given from the town of East Hampton adorned with coins and painted rocks and shells sits in front of the small piece of land explains that Stephen Pharoah, the man who had once petitioned NY to recognize the unfairness of the 1703 treaty, was buried here in 1879 (Photograph 5.1). There are unmarked graves throughout the site.

Standing at the edge of the field and looking out at the gravestones felt like witnessing the end to a different story than the one potentially being offered by the Montauk Lighthouse, one in which the people at the heart of the story perished, succumbing to whatever antagonistic force opposed them.

But then, as I walked back to the car, I took a closer look at the stones surrounding the plaque at the entrance to the cemetery. One of them appeared to be freshly painted. An intricate wooden craft with beads sat nearby. A shiny ring had found its way into the gap between two rocks. Each one of these things looked new, and the landscape felt more alive, more active, than it had just a moment before. Yes, I stood at a cemetery, a place where chapters generally close, and people rest, but all of the little

tokens and memorials placed around the plaque reminded me of the current efforts of the living Montaukett to continue fighting for recognition. Though there is still a long path ahead in reshaping Long Island to better reflect its history and current inhabitants and contribute to the equal access to rights through legal recognition of different tribes like the Montaukett, there is indeed a path forward.

Just because the landscape is filled with narratives of extinction and colonial heroism does not mean that the landscape cannot change or offer different narratives. Just



Photograph 5.1: The plaque at the entrance to Indian Field Cemetery in Montauk. It commemorates the place in which the Montaukett once lived, which has since become a cemetery home to Stephen Pharoah and many other unnamed Montaukett.

as Long Island changed when the colonists arrived, so too can it change now. By taking a more critical look at our landscape and investigating the narratives that it tells about the people who live here, we can better understand how people are represented, or misrepresented if they are not left out entirely. Once we examine the current landscape, we can determine what landmarks need to be changed in order to more accurately represent the island's inhabitants and history. That may involve moving statues to locations that are more suited to telling their stories, and filling the space left behind with new statues or landmarks. It may involve the restructuring of museums so that they are designed by indigenous people who wish to share their history. As the landscape changes, so too will our awareness of the people around us. This awareness, hopefully, will lead us to a more just and equal community that expands its perception of itself to include some of the people who currently find themselves outside of what is considered "acceptable" by the nation. By this, I do not necessarily mean we all have to be members of one nation, but rather we accept and celebrate our differences rather than create categories used to reinforce exclusionary practices and places.

Throughout the United States, Indigenous people face threats to their lives and health, culture and identity, and land. However, the way that these issues play out on Long Island are striking when compared to other parts of the nation, particularly the western half of the continent. Perhaps it is because the eastern part of the continent was colonized first, but the native people are much more visible in the west than they are on Long Island. Rather than ignore the existence of indigenous people, in 2012, Senator John McCain was sent to negotiate a settlement between Arizona and the Navajo Nation which would have "established the terms by which the Navajo Nation would forever



“resolve” its collective claims to the river in exchange for small water infrastructure and remaining waters after upstream diversions are taken into account” (Curley, 2019, 57). At this point in history, the United States and Arizona still recognize the Navajo Nation as being extant and communicate with them, though it should be said that this may change in future years (and should be monitored so that what happened to the Montaukett does not happen to any other nation). The US is still actively trying to take more land for itself, but the current state of these issues is more public and recognizable to the settler descendants living in the west than they are on Long Island.

Recognition of the indigenous presence out west offers a variety of additional issues. At an archeological conference, Rena Martin, a member of the Navajo Nation and archeologist, explained that at the conference, “I made a comment about not having a meaningful voice in the management of my cultural heritage located on public lands. Although there was some verbal agreement, it was offered only after a comment typical of many non-Native locals: ‘the Dinétah [the Navajo homeland] is also a part of my cultural heritage.’ To me Dinétah is a place of my ancestry and that of other neighboring tribes” (Martin, 2001, 35). The other scientists claimed the same land as being part of their cultural heritage, as somehow being a part of who they are in a modern sense. On Long Island, non-indigenous people claim the Island’s past while the present is kept hidden behind colonial monuments, museums, and misrepresentations. The Navajo are not hidden, but are present in the landscape, and face claims from non-indigenous people on the land.

Despite the continued theft of land and rights and claims upon their land, not all aspects of indigenous/US relations end in the favor of the US. In 2020, the Supreme

Court of the US ruled that about half of the land within the state of Oklahoma actually fell within the boundaries of a Native Reservation. (Wamsley, 2020). After the decision, Kevin Washburn, dean of the University of Iowa Law School, explained that, “For Indian people, their land is really important, and treaties are really important. They're sacred. And this reaffirms the sacredness of those promises and those treaties.” (Wamsley, 2020). The possibility of a similar ruling occurring within the context of Long Island is unthinkable when the indigenous population not only lacks a legal land base but is not even recognized as existing.

As this thesis draws to a close, I want to emphasize that there is more to learn. I went into this thesis without much knowledge of Long Island’s history, or of the struggles that indigenous people face today. Due to Covid-19, I was unable to visit the Shinnecock Museum located in the Shinnecock on the south shore of Long Island, and so was unable to look at how an indigenous run museum differs from the museum in Southold which is run by the town historical society. Though I relied heavily on the Matouwac Research Center website, a more well-rounded and thorough thesis would need to include a discussion of the Shinnecock museum.

Even if I had been able to go to the Shinnecock museum, there would still be additional avenues to explore. The statues that I picked are by no means the only statues on Long Island. President Theodore Roosevelt lived at Sagamore Hill, about twenty minutes from my house, and there are a plethora of statues dedicated to him. I mentioned in chapter 4 that he dedicated the Underhill Memorial. Being able to investigate his connection to indigenous rights and dispossession, whether or not there is a connection, would be interesting. I would have also looked at the stories of George Washington that

permeate the landscape, and his role in determining what landmarks were built where in more detail. It seems that wherever you go around Long Island, you will encounter a story about how George Washington once visited and impacted the landscape there in some way. How do stories surrounding the first president of the United States, one of the founding fathers, draw attention away from other stories? How do they manifest in the landscape? How do they inform the viewpoint and actions of the people who encounter them?

I also would have liked to research more about how the Shinnecock and Poospatuck reservations came to be. What struggles did they go through over the course of history? Why are they both recognized by New York State but not by the Federal Government? The Shinnecock in particular have been criticized recently for constructing two billboards at the edge of the reservation along the highway that leads into the Hamptons. These signs significantly impact their visibility to non-Shinnecock. What implications does this current struggle over space have for the Shinnecock and other native groups? Do they face pressure today to maintain a certain image that New York State recognizes as extant?

What I do know from my research is that the struggles that began with the onset of colonialism have never ended. They continue today, albeit in different forms. Through the process of nationalism and the creation of the US, the landscape has been altered and used in such a way as to present Long Islanders as being one people. But rather than a harmonious utopia, this image of one community is built on specific Western European values and notions of personhood, and actively seeks to hide people and histories that do not conform to that image. People are left out, as are their struggles and stories. We have

not created a society in which we all come together, but one in which certain people are hidden from view, their voices ignored. And to make sure that they remain hidden, museums, monuments, and other features in the landscape have been constructed to remind everyone who experiences them of the Long Island that centuries of colonialism and nationalism have created.

There are so many more things to consider and learn about/from when looking at the landscape and creation of Long Island. I hope that this thesis is just the starting point of my efforts to learn more about this place that I have always called home, and I hope that it sparks some questions in my fellow Long Islanders, and an interest in thinking about how our communities came to be, and all the processes that have and continue to maintain them.

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